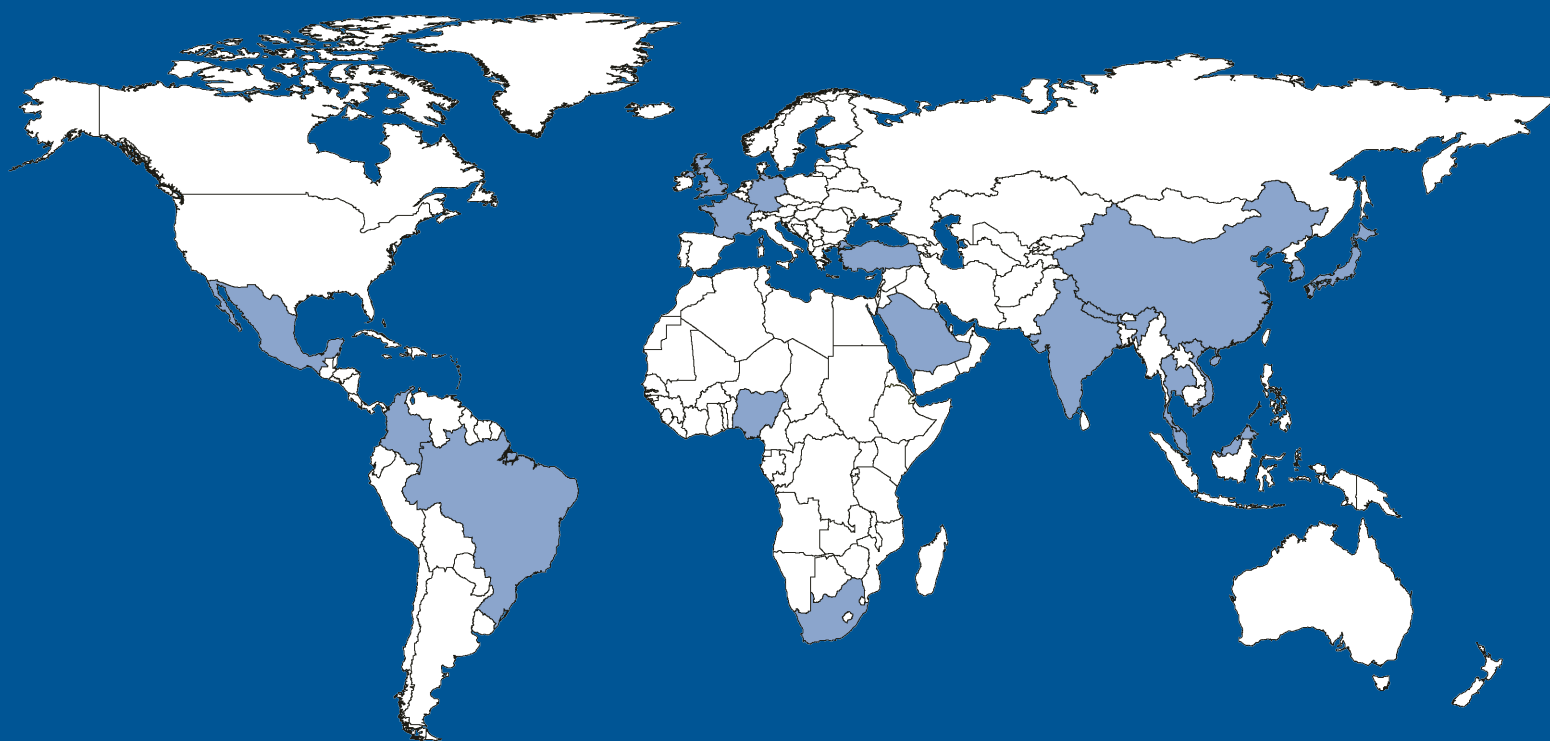


# What International Students Think About U.S. Higher Education:

## Attitudes and Perceptions of Prospective Students from Around the World

New edition, revised and expanded



## Institute of International Education

An independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 1919, IIE is among the world's largest and most experienced international education and training organizations.

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# **What International Students Think About U.S. Higher Education:**

Attitudes and Perceptions of  
Prospective Students from  
Around the World

Report prepared by:

**IIE Center for Academic Mobility Research and Impact  
Institute of International Education**

**2015**

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# Executive Summary

**T**his IIE report examines the attitudes and perceptions that international students who are considering studying in the United States have of U.S. higher education. The following research questions are explored: What attracts students from other countries to study in the U.S.? What course of study do they intend to pursue? Do they prefer the U.S. to other key destinations? What are the perceived barriers facing students who wish to study in the U.S.?

To answer these and other questions, IIE, in cooperation with EducationUSA, surveyed prospective students in selected countries in five major sending regions about their preferred study destinations, their reasons for studying internationally, the perceived obstacles they faced, their main sources of information on overseas study and their opinions of the U.S. as a potential study destination compared to other key host destinations.

IIE began conducting the surveys in 2009 in Vietnam and India. This was followed by Brazil, Germany, Hong Kong, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey and the United Kingdom in 2010. Surveys were then conducted in Colombia, France, Japan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and South Korea in 2011, in Nepal in 2012 and in China in 2013. A total of 15,902 valid student responses were received.

Key findings include:

- the U.S. is the destination of choice for the vast majority of respondents worldwide, with 74 percent of prospective students reporting the U.S. as their top choice;
- over three-quarters (77 percent) of prospective students worldwide perceived the U.S. to have a high quality higher education system;
- over three-quarters (78 percent) of prospective students worldwide feel the U.S. has a wide range of schools and programs to suit a variety of different students;
- over two-thirds (68 percent) of prospective students worldwide feel that the U.S. welcomes international students;
- cost was cited as the primary obstacle to overseas study by respondents in all countries; 62 percent of prospective students worldwide perceived tuition in the U.S. to be expensive;
- concerns about obtaining a visa to study in the U.S. varied by country, ranging from 22 percent of students in Turkey to 73 percent of students in France.

**EducationUSA** is a network of hundreds of advising centers in 170 countries, where millions of international students each year find accurate, comprehensive, and current information about how to apply to accredited U.S. colleges and universities. The EducationUSA network is supported by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), which strives to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. EducationUSA advisers and staff work with U.S. higher education professionals to promote international student enrollment. U.S. and international students alike can prepare for leadership roles in today's world through an international education.

EducationUSA Advising Centers may be located in U.S. embassies and consulates, or in a variety of partner institutions, including Fulbright commissions, bi-national cultural centers, non-profit organizations, universities, and libraries. Advising centers are staffed by EducationUSA advisers, many of whom have first-hand experience studying in the United States. Advisers adhere to EducationUSA ethical standards, abide by the EducationUSA policy to refrain from working with commission-based recruitment agents, and have U.S. State Department-approved training about the U.S. higher education system and application processes. Regional educational advising coordinators (REACs) provide guidance, leadership and training to advisers. The U.S. Department of State partners with the Institute of International Education (IIE) to support EducationUSA activities. For more information, please visit the EducationUSA website at [www.educationusa.state.gov](http://www.educationusa.state.gov).



# I. Overview

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## Introduction

The growth of the international student population in the United States reflects the broader global trend of the increasing number of students who pursue higher education outside their homelands each year. In 2012, 4.5 million students studied internationally worldwide, an increase of about 5 percent over the previous year, and an increase of over 50 percent since 2005 (OECD, 2014). These trends are expected to continue in the next decade.

In 2013/14, the U.S. hosted a record high of 886,052 international students (*Open Doors*, 2014). Although the U.S. market share has declined in the last decade, the U.S. nevertheless hosted far more international students than any other destination. The United Kingdom, the second most popular international study destination, hosted about 481,050 international students, less than two-thirds of the U.S. total.

According to Project Atlas, a collaborative research and data-sharing initiative with 22 country partners and six research affiliates, in 2013, the top five study destinations (the U.S., the U.K., China, France and Germany) hosted 52 percent of the world's tertiary-level mobile students. At about four percent, the proportion of international students to overall higher education enrollment in the U.S. remains quite small compared to other top host countries, although the percentage is higher at the graduate level (*Open Doors*, 2014). With over 4,000 institutions of higher education in the U.S., there is tremendous potential for more institutions to host more international students, particularly at the undergraduate and non-degree levels.

Students around the world are starting to study in a more diverse range of destinations. China and many other host countries are increasing efforts to internationalize their academic institutions and attract more international students. National and institutional strategies implemented by both traditional and emerging host destinations create a competitive international environment for recruiting top talent from around the world. At the same time, the growing demand for higher education worldwide will continue to generate the need for expanded international

education capacity for years to come, as home countries remain unable to meet increased demand locally.

In this era of global competition for the world's best and brightest, prospective international students are well-informed and selective consumers of higher education. In order to better understand what potential international students think about U.S. higher education, the Institute of International Education (IIE), with support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, conducted a series of perceptual and attitudinal surveys in selected countries in four key sending regions. The following research questions are explored: What attracts students from other countries to study in the U.S.? What courses of study do they intend to pursue? Do they prefer the U.S. to other key destinations? What perceived barriers do students who wish to study in the U.S. face? IIE began conducting the surveys in Vietnam and India in 2009, followed by Brazil, Germany, Hong Kong, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey and the United Kingdom in 2010, Colombia, France, Japan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and South Korea in 2011, Nepal in 2012 and China in 2013. In addition, the survey was conducted a second time in the UK in 2011 following the December 2010 announcement of increased tuition fees. A total of 15,902 valid student responses were received across all countries.

The majority of respondents worldwide (53 percent) were female, while 47 percent were male (Fig. 1). In addition, 27 percent were current high school students, 46 percent were undergraduate degree students or had completed an undergraduate degree but no graduate degree, 19 percent were graduate students and 9 percent were students at technical schools or studying at other levels, including in non-degree programs.

## Preferred International Study Destinations

The most popular first-choice destination chosen by respondents worldwide was the United States, with 74 percent of prospective international students listing the

# I. Overview

U.S. as their top choice (Fig. 2). The United Kingdom was the next most cited first-choice destination, with over 8 percent of the total, followed by Canada (five percent) and Australia (three percent).

The preferred destinations of respondents reflect existing patterns of global student mobility. In 2013, the U.S. hosted 20 percent of the 4.5 million students worldwide who are pursuing higher education outside their home countries. The U.K. has the next largest portion, with 11 percent of the total, followed by China (eight percent), France (seven percent), Australia (six percent), Germany (five percent) Canada (five percent) and Japan (three percent) (*Project Atlas*, 2014). While Spain does not figure among the top eight host destinations worldwide, it is a popular study destination for students from Latin America.

## Impressions of Key Host Destinations

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with a set of statements about each host destination, including whether or not the study destination has a wide range of schools and programs, has a high quality higher education system, welcomes international students, has many opportunities for student scholarships, has good student support services and is a safe place to study (Fig. 3). Potential students were also asked whether they felt the study destination had: expensive tuition; a high cost of living; difficult or complex visa procedures; or a significant language barrier.

The majority of students rated the U.S. more positively than other potential destinations for most dimensions. Over three-quarters (78 percent) of respondents worldwide perceived the U.S. to have a wide range of schools and programs, as compared with 34 percent for the U.K. and 26 percent for Canada, the host destinations with the next highest percentages.

Over three-quarters (77 percent) of respondents worldwide also perceived the U.S. to have a high quality higher education system, as compared with 49 percent for the U.K., 33 percent for Germany and 32 percent each for France and Canada.

Figure 1: Gender of Survey Respondents

	% Female	% Male
Brazil	55.5%	44.5%
China	74.7%	25.3%
Colombia	47.5%	52.5%
France	58.3%	41.7%
Germany	61.3%	38.7%
Hong Kong	62.6%	37.4%
India	40.0%	60.0%
Japan	45.1%	54.9%
Malaysia	54.8%	45.2%
Mexico	52.0%	48.0%
Nepal	31.0%	69.0%
Nigeria	44.0%	56.0%
Saudi Arabia	27.3%	72.7%
South Africa	69.2%	30.8%
South Korea	46.2%	53.8%
Thailand	65.0%	35.0%
Turkey	50.5%	49.5%
United Kingdom	58.5%	41.5%
Vietnam	62.9%	37.1%
TOTAL (N=15,902)	53.4%	46.6%

Figure 2: Preferred Study Destination of Prospective International Students

Study Destination	% of Total
United States	74.2%
United Kingdom	8.1%
Canada	4.8%
Australia	2.9%
France	1.6%
Spain	1.2%
Germany	1.2%
Japan	0.9%
Other	5.1%
TOTAL (N=15,902)	100.0%

# I. Overview

Figure 3: Percent of Prospective Students Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination

	U.S.	U.K.	France	Germany	China	Australia	Canada	Japan
Wide range of schools and programs	78.3	33.5	21.2	21.1	2.6	19.5	25.9	9.5
High quality higher education system	77.0	49.1	32.0	33.0	2.4	18.9	31.8	15.0
Welcomes international students	67.7	29.8	26.0	28.1	7.6	33.8	39.6	14.2
Tuition is expensive	61.9	51.1	22.9	17.2	2.9	18.1	21.6	15.2
Many scholarship opportunities	59.4	16.7	13.3	17.4	4.9	14.7	20.3	11.2
Good student support services	56.8	24.7	18.7	23.5	2.5	19.3	30.4	8.9
Difficult or complex visa procedures	50.3	24.0	12.2	10.4	11.4	12.7	14.6	15.3
Safe place to study	45.6	35.9	42.4	40.7	5.2	33.3	43.9	21.6
High cost of living	41.8	55.4	35.2	23.1	2.0	16.7	15.7	26.0
Language barrier	14.1	12.7	67.2	74.5	47.8	8.7	6.9	62.8
Number of responses	15,902	13,001	6,243	5,063	1,327	14,990	7,676	3,224

Read table as: "78.3 percent of prospective students agree that the U.S. has a wide range of schools and programs."

Over two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents worldwide felt that the U.S. welcomes international students, as compared with 40 percent for Canada, 34 percent for Australia and 30 percent for the U.K., the host destinations with the next highest percentages.

The U.S. was rated a host destination with many scholarship opportunities and good student support services by over half of respondents (59 percent and 57 percent, respectively). This is a substantially higher proportion than those of the other host destinations.

About 46 percent of respondents perceived the U.S. to be a safe place to study, similar to the proportions for Canada, France and Germany, and higher than the proportions for the other countries.

## Barriers and Challenges

Over 62 percent of respondents worldwide felt tuition in the U.S. to be expensive, the highest among all of the host destinations (Fig. 3). Tuition in the U.K. was also perceived to be expensive by the majority (51 percent) of

respondents. In addition, 50 percent of respondents felt the U.S. had difficult or complex student visa procedures, also the highest of any host destination. Only 24 percent of respondents felt that the U.K. had difficult or complex student visa procedures, the host destination with the next highest percentage. However, many of these surveys were conducted prior to the changes to visa procedures and tuition increases in both the U.K. and Australia.

The largest proportion of respondents found the U.K. to have a high cost of living (55 percent), followed by the U.S. (42 percent) and France (35 percent).

Germany was seen as having a significant language barrier by the highest number of respondents (75 percent), followed by France and Japan (67 and 63 percent, respectively).

This section is followed by regional findings of Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, which will include spotlight countries within the regions. The report concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings.



## II. Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa has one of the highest outbound student mobility rates in the world, with students from Sub-Saharan Africa comprising eight percent of globally mobile students worldwide (UNESCO, 2014). In many African countries, there is limited domestic capacity in tertiary education to accommodate all of the students who wish to pursue higher education. In some countries, including Botswana, Cape Verde and Swaziland, more than 50 percent of students pursue higher education abroad.

The 31,113 students from Sub-Saharan Africa comprised just under four percent of the 886,052 international students in the U.S. in 2013/14 (*Open Doors*, 2014). The majority (56 percent) of students from Sub-Saharan Africa are enrolled at the undergraduate level, with less than one-third (29 percent) enrolled at the graduate level, and 15 percent enrolled in non-degree programs or on Optional Practical Training (OPT). The top Sub-Saharan African places of origin of students in the U.S. are Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Cameroon and Ethiopia. Only Nigeria has figured among the top 25 overall places of origin of international students in the U.S.

### Nigeria

Nigeria is the top African place of origin of international students in the U.S. and is ranked nineteenth among all places of origin of international students in the U.S. During the 2013/14 academic year, 7,912 Nigerian students were studying at U.S. colleges and universities, an 8.3 percent increase from the previous year. In comparison, over 18,305 Nigerian students were studying in the U.K. in 2013/14.

In fall 2010, IIE and EducationUSA conducted a survey of prospective students in Nigeria, regarding their attitudes and perceptions of U.S. higher education compared to other popular host destinations. Respondents were

Figure 4: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Nigeria

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	88.9%	16.1%
United Kingdom	6.3%	36.0%
Canada	3.4%	29.6%
Asia	1.0%	5.9%
Continental Europe	0.5%	6.5%
Africa	n/a	3.8%
Australia	n/a	2.2%
Middle East	n/a	0.5%
No second choice	n/a	20.4%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

asked about perceived obstacles to international study, preferred study destinations, intended major or field of study, reasons for studying overseas and main sources of information on studying in the U.S. Respondents were drawn from attendees at EducationUSA-sponsored college fairs in Lagos and Abuja. A total of 211 valid responses were received.

The majority of respondents (56 percent) were male, while 44 percent were female. About 85 percent had already decided to study abroad, while 15 percent were just starting to think about studying abroad. In addition, 54 percent of respondents were interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree abroad; 43 percent were interested in a graduate degree (MA or PhD); 23 percent were interested in a professional degree (MBA, JD, MD, etc.) and four percent were interested in foreign language study, including intensive English (respondents could select more than one choice). Six percent were undecided as to the level of study they wished to pursue abroad.

## II. Africa

Figure 5: Percent of Students from Africa Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination

	<u>Students from Nigeria</u>			<u>Students from South Africa</u>		
	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	U.S.	U.K.	Australia
Wide range of schools and programs	80.6	18.0	3.8	59.6	16.6	5.3
Many scholarship opportunities	79.6	22.4	2.8	57.6	11.9	6.0
High quality higher education system	77.7	10.4	3.8	100.0	25.2	10.6
Welcomes international students	73.0	18.0	5.2	59.6	15.9	2.0
Good student support services	71.1	8.7	5.2	60.9	13.9	4.6
Safe place to study	64.0	25.1	10.9	57.0	18.5	9.3
Difficult to get a student visa	48.8	17.1	4.3	23.8	17.2	5.3
Expensive tuition	40.8	47.9	7.1	45.0	14.9	6.6
Costly application process	33.2	35.1	4.3	36.4	23.8	4.6
High cost of living	30.8	50.7	4.7	43.0	26.5	6.6
Language barrier	4.3	2.4	10.4	14.9	6.0	5.3

Engineering was the most popular field of study of prospective Nigerian students, chosen by 30 percent of respondents, followed by physical and life sciences (23 percent), and business/management (17 percent).

The United States was the overwhelming first-choice study destination for respondents in Nigeria. Almost nine out of every ten respondents (89 percent) listed the U.S. as their first-choice destination in an open-ended question (Fig. 4).

The United Kingdom was the second most cited preferred destination, with six percent of respondents listing the U.K. as their destination of choice. The United Kingdom was also the most cited alternative destination, listed by 36 percent of respondents from Nigeria. Canada was the second most cited alternate destination among Nigerian students, with 30 percent of the total.

The U.S. was perceived to have a high quality higher education system by 78 percent of Nigerian respondents (Fig. 5). The majority of respondents also felt the U.S. to have a wide range of schools and programs (81 percent)

and many scholarship opportunities (80 percent), to welcome international students (73 percent) and to have good student support services (71 percent).

However, almost half (49 percent) of respondents in Nigeria felt that it was difficult to get a visa to study in the U.S.; 41 percent perceived tuition at U.S. colleges and universities to be expensive; and 31 percent felt the cost of living in the U.S. to be high. Even higher percentages felt that U.K. tuition and living costs were high (48 percent and 51 percent, respectively).

Among Nigerian respondents, the top sources of information on study in the U.S. were EducationUSA (40 percent), parents or relatives (38 percent), the internet (32 percent) and friends or classmates (30 percent).

## II. Africa

### South Africa

In 2013/14, 1,716 South African students were studying at U.S. colleges and universities, a five percent decrease from the previous year's total. In fall 2010, IIE and EducationUSA conducted a survey of prospective students in South Africa, regarding their attitudes and perceptions of U.S. higher education, compared to other potential host destinations. Respondents were asked about perceived obstacles to international study, their preferred study destinations, intended major or field of study, reasons for wishing to study internationally and main sources of information on studying in the U.S. Respondents were drawn from attendees at an EducationUSA-sponsored college fair in Johannesburg. A total of 151 valid student responses were received.

Among respondents from South Africa, 69 percent were female and 31 percent were male. 55 percent had already decided to study overseas, and 45 percent were only beginning to consider it. In addition, 48 percent were interested in undergraduate studies; 23 percent in graduate studies; 22 percent in a professional degree and nine percent each in two-year degree/certificate programs and in foreign language study (including intensive English).

Students from South Africa were most interested in studying business and management (27 percent), engineering (23 percent) and fine or applied arts (12 percent) overseas.

The overwhelming first-choice overseas study destination was the United States. Over nine out of every ten respondents (92 percent) listed the U.S. as their top choice in an open-ended question (Fig. 6). The United Kingdom was the next most cited first-choice destination, with four percent of the total. The U.K. was the most frequently cited alternative destination, with 46 percent of the total, followed by Canada, with 15 percent.

The U.S. was perceived to have a high quality higher education system by 100 percent of respondents (Fig. 5). In addition, the majority of respondents felt the U.S. to have a wide range of schools and programs (60

Figure 6: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from South Africa

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	91.8%	9.9%
United Kingdom	4.1%	45.5%
Canada	1.4%	14.9%
Australia	0.7%	13.2%
Other Europe	0.7%	12.4%
Asia	n/a	5.8%
Africa	0.7%	5.0%
Middle East	n/a	1.7%
Other	0.6%	1.7%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

percent), many scholarship opportunities (58 percent), be welcoming to international students (60 percent) and have good student support services (61 percent).

However, 45 percent of respondents in South Africa perceived tuition at U.S. colleges and universities to be expensive, 43 percent of respondents felt that the cost of living in the U.S. is high and a quarter of respondents (24 percent) indicated that they felt it was difficult to get a visa to study in the U.S.

When asked about perceived obstacles to international study in any country, 52 percent of respondents in South Africa cited cost as a major obstacle, regardless of destination, followed by gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (24 percent). Only five percent of respondents in South Africa indicated they felt that obtaining a student visa would be a major obstacle.

The top sources of information on study in the U.S. for South African respondents were EducationUSA (46 percent), teachers or professors (21 percent) and the internet (21 percent).

## III. Asia

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**S**tudents from Asia comprise 53 percent of globally mobile students, the largest group of international students in the world. The over 694,400 students from China alone who are studying in other countries comprise 15 percent of the world total. In addition, over 189,000 Indian students are studying outside their home country (UNESCO, 2014; OECD, 2014).

In 2013/14, there were 568,510 students from Asia studying at U.S. colleges and universities, a eight percent increase over the previous year's total and 64 percent of the overall total of 886,052 international students in the U.S. (*Open Doors*, 2014). Sixty-nine percent of these students came from East Asia (393,205), 23 percent were from South and Central Asia (127,301) and eight percent were from Southeast Asia (48,004).

Students from Asia are primarily studying in degree programs at the graduate level (41 percent of the total), and at the undergraduate level (39 percent), with the remaining 20 percent studying in non-degree programs or on Optional Practical Training (OPT). Academic level varies by place of origin and sub-region, with students from South and Central Asia more heavily concentrated at the graduate level, and students from Southeast Asia more concentrated at the undergraduate level, while students from East Asia are almost evenly split between undergraduates and graduate students.

### China

**C**hina was the top place of origin of international students in the U.S. from 1988/89 through 1993/94 and from 1998/99 through 2000/01. In 2009/10 China once again re-took the top position and currently is the largest sender of international students to the United States. In the 2013/14 there were 274,493 international students from China, an increase of 71 percent in comparison with the previous year's total. Forty percent of students from China are studying at the undergraduate level, 42 percent are studying at the

graduate level and the remainder is enrolled in non-degree programs (six percent) and in optional practical training (12 percent).

During the fall of 2013, IIE conducted an online survey of prospective students in China regarding their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. and other top host destinations. Responses were collected by an IIE volunteer researcher who administered electronic surveys to prospective students in Shanghai and surrounding regions. A total of 772 valid responses were received.

The majority of respondents were from Shanghai (58 percent), twenty-eight percent were from Suzhou, while the remaining 14 percent of respondents were from other cities in China. Three times as many responses were received from female students as from male students; female respondents constituted 75 percent of the responses received.

The majority of the respondents (79 percent) were at the undergraduate level, 28 percent were at the graduate level and the rest were at the secondary level or were enrolled in other forms of education. Almost 40 percent of respondents indicated that they were just beginning to consider studying abroad and 37 percent indicated that they had already decided to study abroad.

Business and management was the most popular intended field of study, cited by the 60 percent of respondents. Foreign language (e.g. intensive English) and humanities were the second and third most popular intended fields of study, chosen by the 14 and 12 percent of respondents, respectively. Forty-five percent of respondents were interested in study abroad at the graduate level, 23 were interested in undergraduate study and 22 percent intended to pursue a professional degree abroad. The rest indicated interest in other levels of study, including short-term or non-degree education.

Most Chinese students seeking to study abroad are seeking career preparation or advancement. The majority of Chinese students (75 percent) cited better career prospects as the primary reason to study abroad. The

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ability to make professional contacts was the second most frequently cited reason to study overseas (cited by 19 percent of respondents).

The majority of prospective students from China (42 percent) indicated the United States as their first choice study abroad destination (Fig. 7). The United Kingdom was the second most cited first-choice destination, with 27 percent of the total, followed by Canada and Australia, which were each selected as a first-choice destination by 6 percent of respondents.

As the second choice destination, the United Kingdom was cited the most frequently, with 34 percent of the total, followed closely by Canada (33 percent) and the United States (32 percent). Australia was the fourth most popular alternate destination, with 29 percent of the total.

The U.S. was perceived to have a high quality education system by the majority of respondents (82 percent), followed by the United Kingdom, which was perceived to have a high quality education system by 63 percent

**Figure 7: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from China**

<u>Destination</u>	<u>First Choice</u>	<u>Alternate Choice</u>
United States	41.5%	31.6%
United Kingdom	27.6%	33.9%
Canada	6.3%	33.3%
Australia	5.5%	28.9%
France	3.9%	13.9%
Germany	3.5%	13.3%
Japan	3.4%	8.4%
South Korea	1.6%	5.2%
Other destinations	6.7%	10.1%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 8: Percent of Students in China Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	<b>USA</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>South Korea</b>	<b>Europe</b>
High quality higher education system	82.1	63.1	22.2	25.3	15.9	5.8	22.9
Wide range of schools and programs	79.7	44.4	22.2	20.6	9.8	4.9	19.6
Welcomes international students	57.9	28.4	37.8	35.9	9.5	9.8	16.3
Good student support services	50.4	29.8	25.4	26.6	9.8	7.0	16.1
Expensive tuition	61.8	58.0	19.9	19.2	12.0	6.5	21.2
Many scholarship opportunities	56.5	24.5	17.7	18.1	7.3	6.1	11.5
Costly school application process	54.8	41.1	12.8	14.1	7.5	6.1	19.0
Safe place to study	13.6	37.8	30.4	30.4	16.5	12.2	18.1
High cost of living	54.9	57.8	19.2	18.9	17.1	8.8	24.1
Language barrier	24.2	16.7	13.7	13.0	48.8	46.2	31.2
Difficult to get a visa	39.6	29.8	9.6	9.5	8.5	4.5	22.0

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of respondents (Fig. 8). The majority of respondents (80 percent) also felt that the U.S. offers a wide range of schools and programs. More than half of respondents perceived the U.S. to welcome international students, to provide many scholarship opportunities and to have good student support services.

On the other hand, more than half of respondents indicated that they perceive the U.S. to have expensive tuition (62 percent), high cost of living and costly school application process (each selected by 55 percent of respondents). Only 14 percent of respondents perceive the United States as a safe place to study. In comparison, UK, Australia and Canada were viewed safe by more than 30 percent of respondents. Twenty-four percent of respondents indicated a significant language barrier to study in the U.S., a slightly higher proportion than for other Anglophone countries, such as United Kingdom (17 percent), Australia (14 percent) or Canada (13 percent).

The majority (63 percent) of prospective students from China cited cost of study as a major obstacle in pursuing education abroad regardless of destination. The second and the third most frequently cited obstacles were gaining acceptance to the school of your choice (50 percent) and cultural differences (34.5 percent). The least frequently cited obstacle was obtaining a visa (8 percent).

Parents were cited as having the most influence on educational decisions by 38 percent of respondents. Twenty-nine percent of Chinese students indicated that they themselves are the most important influence in their educational decision and 19 percent indicated their teachers and professors were the most influential.

Friends and classmates are reported to be the most popular source of information about studying in the U.S. (45 percent), followed by teachers and professors (42 percent), and EducationUSA (38 percent). Other popular sources of information about studying in the U.S. included parents and relatives (30 percent), websites (28 percent), and career counselors or advisers (24 percent).

### Hong Kong

**H**ong Kong is the fifth top place of origin in East Asia, eighth in all of Asia and 17th among all places of origin of international students in the U.S. In 2013/14 there were 8,104 students from Hong Kong studying at U.S. colleges and universities, a one percent increase from the previous year's total. Seventy two percent of students from Hong Kong were studying in undergraduate degree programs, 12 percent were studying in graduate degree programs, six percent were studying in non-degree programs and ten percent were on Optional Practical Training (OPT).

In fall 2010, IIE's office in Hong Kong conducted a survey of students in Hong Kong who were interested in studying overseas. Respondents were drawn from visitors to the EducationUSA advising office in Hong Kong and the IIEsponsored college fair. 188 valid responses were received; 63 percent were female and 37 percent were male. Most (68 percent) were interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree abroad and 52 percent were also interested in a graduate or professional degree.

Most (68 percent) were interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree abroad and 52 percent were also interested in a graduate or professional degree. Business and management was the most popular intended field of study (28 percent of the total), followed by fine or applied arts (17 percent), physical or life sciences (16 percent), social sciences (14 percent) and humanities (11 percent).

The U.S. was the most frequently cited first-choice destination, with 78 percent of respondents listing the U.S. in an open-ended question (Fig. 9). The U.K. was the next most cited first-choice destination (with 12 percent of the total), followed by Australia and Canada (four percent each). Among alternative destinations, the United Kingdom was the most popular, with 39 percent of the total, followed by the United States (17 percent), Australia (16 percent) and Canada (14 percent).

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The majority of respondents perceived the U.S. to have a wide range of schools and programs (81 percent), a high quality higher education system (77 percent) and be welcoming to international students (76 percent) (Fig. 10). However, many respondents also felt that tuition in the U.S. is expensive (61 percent) and that the cost of living in the U.S. is high (57 percent).

Half (50 percent) of respondents cited cost as a major obstacle to being able to study overseas (regardless of destination). Other obstacles included gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (42 percent), choosing from the many available options (37 percent) and finding accurate information (36 percent).

**Figure 9: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Hong Kong**

<u>Destination</u>	<u>First Choice</u>	<u>Alternate Choice</u>
United States	78.1%	17.0%
United Kingdom	11.8%	38.8%
Australia	3.9%	15.4%
Canada	3.9%	13.8%
Mainland China	0.6%	1.1%
Other Asian destination	n/a	3.8%
No alternate choice	n/a	18.1%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 10: Percent of Students in Hong Kong Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Canada	Australia	Mainland China	Singapore/ Malaysia
Wide range of schools and programs	81.4	44.1	14.9	17.6	3.7	1.7
High quality higher education system	77.1	58.0	16.5	16.5	4.3	6.4
Welcomes international students	75.5	49.5	33.5	33.5	12.2	11.7
Availability of general education studies	75.0	22.9	14.4	12.2	2.1	2.1
Good student support services	64.9	40.4	17.6	18.6	5.9	7.4
Many internship opportunities	64.4	29.8	15.4	18.6	6.9	5.3
Expensive tuition	61.2	58.0	9.6	9.6	1.7	2.7
Many scholarship opportunities	57.4	25.0	9.6	9.6	3.7	2.7
High cost of living	56.9	60.6	17.0	13.3	0.5	3.7
Costly application process	48.9	38.3	10.6	8.5	1.1	1.1
Difficult to get a student visa	36.2	18.6	5.9	6.4	3.2	3.2
Safe place to study	30.3	42.6	32.4	30.9	9.6	16.0
Language barrier	17.6	11.2	3.2	5.3	14.9	12.8



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### India

India was the top place of origin of international students in the U.S. from 2001/02 through 2008/09, with China re-taking the top position in 2009/10. In 2013/14, there were 102,673 students from India studying in the United States, with the majority (60 percent) studying at the graduate level. During the summer of 2009, IIE conducted a survey in India of 1,044 students regarding their attitudes and perceptions of U.S. higher education compared to five other potential host destinations: the United Kingdom, Australia, continental Europe, Southeast/East Asia and the Middle East. Respondents were also asked about perceived obstacles, preferred international study destinations, intended major or field of study, reasons for wishing to study overseas, main sources of information on overseas study.

Respondents were drawn from visitors to the U.S. Department of State-funded EducationUSA advising centers in four cities in India: Mumbai (31 percent), Chennai (27 percent), Delhi (23 percent) and Kolkata (19 percent). Sixty percent of respondents were male and 40 percent were female. Over two-thirds of respondents indicated that they had already decided to study internationally at the time of the survey, while less than one-third were just starting to think about international study.

Engineering was the most popular intended field of study, chosen by 30 percent of respondents, followed by business and management (26 percent), physical and life sciences (nine percent) and math and computer science (five percent). A higher proportion of men than women indicated engineering as their intended field; among women, business was slightly more popular. Business was also more popular than engineering among respondents in Mumbai and Delhi.

The most frequently cited reason for studying abroad was the quality or type of academic program (cited by 76 percent of respondents). Over one-third (37 percent) cited preparing for a future career in a foreign country or foreign-based company and about one-fifth each cited the cultural experience (21 percent) and making professional contacts (19 percent).

The overwhelming first-choice study abroad destination for these prospective students from India was the United States (Fig. 11). More than nine out of every ten respondents (91 percent) listed the U.S. as their first-choice destination in an open-ended question. The United Kingdom was the second most cited first-choice destination, with four percent of the total, followed by Canada with two percent and Australia with one percent. A number of continental European countries were also mentioned as first-choice destinations: Germany, France, Norway and Russia, as well as Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.

The United Kingdom was the most frequently cited alternate destination, with 36 percent of the total, followed by Canada (14 percent) and Australia (11 percent). The U.S. was the fourth most popular alternate destination, with seven percent of the total.

The U.S. was perceived to have an excellent higher education system by 88 percent of respondents, a much higher percentage than for the United Kingdom (32 percent), Australia (nine percent), continental Europe (also nine percent), Southeast/East Asia (six percent) or the Middle East (one percent) (Fig. 12). Three-quarters of respondents considered the U.S. to have a wide range of schools and programs, also a much higher percentage than for the other destinations (ranging from one and 23 percent), and 68 percent felt that the U.S. welcomes international students (compared to between three and 24 percent for the other destinations). Most respondents also felt that the U.S. has good student support services (61 percent), many scholarship opportunities (60 percent) and is a safe place to study (60 percent).



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However, about half (51 percent) of respondents perceived that the U.S. has a costly school application process, has expensive tuition (50 percent) and that it is difficult to obtain a visa to study in the U.S. (50 percent). In addition, 42 percent felt the U.S. has a high cost of living and 12 percent indicated that there was a significant language barrier.

The highest proportion of respondents (58 percent) listed cost as a major obstacle to studying internationally, regardless of destination, followed by gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (38 percent), finding accurate information (37 percent) and obtaining a visa (15 percent). About five percent of respondents indicated that there were no obstacles facing them with regard to studying internationally.

The top sources of information on study in the U.S. were the U.S.-India Educational Foundation (USIEF)/EducationUSA advising center, fairs and online services; other internet sites or news media; and friends or classmates.

**Figure 11: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from India**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	90.7%	6.7%
United Kingdom	3.7%	35.8%
Canada	1.6%	13.5%
Australia	1.2%	10.5%
Continental Europe	1.1%	17.7%
Southeast/East Asia	1.0%	12.3%
Undecided	0.5%	0.2%
Other	0.2%	1.8%
None (India)	n/a	1.5%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 12: Percent of Students in India Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Continental Europe	Asia	Middle East
High quality higher education system	87.8	31.6	9.0	8.6	5.7	0.5
Wide range of schools and programs	74.9	22.5	8.9	4.7	3.7	0.6
Welcomes international students	68.0	24.1	13.1	7.1	7.8	3.2
Good student support services	60.6	19.2	7.9	6.1	5.0	1.3
Many scholarship opportunities	59.8	15.4	8.0	10.2	4.1	0.9
Safe place to study	59.7	24.1	4.7	11.2	9.6	2.3
Costly application process	51.1	39.5	7.7	8.4	1.8	0.7
Expensive tuition	50.4	41.2	10.2	8.5	1.9	1.1
Difficult to get a student visa	50.2	14.4	5.7	7.5	1.2	1.8
High cost of living	42.4	45.6	9.8	4.1	1.9	2.4
Language barrier	11.8	4.8	3.5	24.0	14.8	21.4

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### Japan

**J**apan was the top place of origin of international students in the U.S. from 1994/95 through 1997/98. However, in recent years, the number of students from Japan studying in the U.S. has declined from a high of 46,872 students in 1999/00 to 19,334 in 2013/14, and Japan is now the seventh leading place of origin of international students in the U.S.

In fall and winter 2011, IIE collaborated with EducationUSA and the Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC) to survey prospective Japanese study abroad students on their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. and other potential host destinations. Students were also asked about the obstacles facing study abroad, their preferred destinations, intended fields of study, reasons for studying abroad and primary sources of information on study in the U.S.

Among respondents from Japan, 55 percent were male and 45 percent were female. Over half (56 percent) had already decided to study abroad at the time of the survey, while 42 percent were just beginning to consider studying overseas and two percent had already studied abroad.

Most respondents indicated making professional contacts as their main reason for studying abroad (54 percent), followed by the cultural experience (51 percent) and preparing for a future career abroad or in a foreign-based company (43 percent). Respondents were also interested in conducting specific research projects or studies not available at home (14 percent) and improving their English language skills (four percent). Respondents could indicate more than one reason.

Respondents were interested in pursuing a variety of different types of study abroad, including graduate degrees (37 percent), undergraduate degrees (29 percent),

short-term (non-degree) study (20 percent), professional degrees, such as an MBA, JD or MD (18 percent) and two-year degrees or certificates (12 percent). Respondents could select more than one choice.

The social sciences (including American studies and international relations) was the most popular intended field of study (chosen by 28 percent of respondents), followed by business and management (26 percent), language study (24 percent), humanities (16 percent), education (13 percent), fine or applied arts (12 percent), physical or life sciences (12 percent), engineering (ten percent) and math or computer science (seven percent).

The United States was the most popular first-choice destination listed in an open response question, with 81 percent of respondents citing the U.S. as their first-choice destination (Fig. 13). The United Kingdom was the second most popular first-choice destination, with six percent of the total, followed by Canada with five percent and Australia with three percent.

Among possible alternate destinations, if their first choice was not available, 30 percent of respondents listed the U.K., 21 percent listed Canada and 13 percent each listed Australia and the U.S.

Compared to four other popular host destinations for Japanese students, the U.S. was perceived as a study destination with a wide range of schools and programs, a high quality higher education system and that welcomes international students by a much higher proportion of students than for the other countries (Fig. 14). However, the majority of respondents (60 percent) also felt that tuition at U.S. colleges and universities was expensive, although most (51 percent) recognized that a large number of scholarships are available. Canada was seen as the destination with the best lifestyle for students, and the United Kingdom was seen as the safest place to study. Only a small proportion of prospective Japanese students (nine percent) felt the U.S. was a safe place to study and about one quarter (26 percent) felt that it would be difficult to obtain a visa to study in the U.S.

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By far the greatest obstacle to studying abroad was cost, cited by almost three-quarters of survey respondents (73 percent), regardless of destination. Other obstacles include gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (39 percent), studying in a foreign language (also 39 percent), and finding accurate information (38 percent).

Respondents from Japan tended to be more strongly influenced by others with regard to their educational decisions than their peers outside Asia. While 37 percent of respondents cited themselves as the most important influence on their educational decisions, 18 percent cited teacher or professors, 17 percent cited friends or classmates and 13 percent cited parents.

Over half (54 percent) of respondents cited the Fulbright/EducationUSA advising office, fairs, events and website as one of their top sources of information on study in the U.S. Other sources include teachers or professors (cited by 29 percent), friends or classmates (26 percent), and the Internet or news media (25 percent).

**Figure 13: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Japan**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	80.5%	12.7%
United Kingdom	6.1%	29.5%
Canada	4.8%	20.9%
Australia	2.9%	13.0%
Germany	0.8%	3.2%
France	0.8%	3.0%
Singapore	0.8%	2.1%
Finland	0.7%	0.6%
All Others	2.6%	12.7%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 14: Percent of Students in Japan Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Canada	Australia	Singapore
Wide range of schools and programs	77.8	19.5	11.6	10.4	2.8
High quality higher education system	68.9	46.1	22.3	11.3	11.2
Welcomes international students	60.2	14.7	26.8	31.7	16.0
Expensive tuition	60.1	44.1	12.6	8.4	3.7
Good student support services	50.9	11.7	16.9	18.8	5.4
Many scholarship opportunities	50.6	5.7	6.8	6.4	2.3
High cost of living	38.8	50.0	11.7	8.1	7.9
Good lifestyle	35.4	36.5	20.9	14.8	11.2
Costly school application process	30.4	19.5	5.8	4.3	2.8
Language barrier	30.2	30.5	23.2	24.7	28.9
Difficult to get a visa	25.6	17.0	3.6	3.0	3.9
Safe place to study	8.8	14.9	45.2	34.8	20.6

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### Malaysia

**M**alaysia is ranked 24th among the leading places of origin of international students in the U.S., with 6,882 Malaysian students studying in the U.S. in 2013/14, a 0.5 percent increase over the previous year. In fall 2011, IIE collaborated with EducationUSA and the Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange (MACEE) to conduct a survey of prospective Malaysian study abroad students regarding their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. as compared with other potential host destinations. Students were also asked about the obstacles facing study abroad, their preferred study destinations, intended fields of study, reasons for studying abroad and primary sources of information on U.S. study.

Among respondents from Malaysia, 55 percent were female and 45 percent were male. About 82 percent were ethnically Malay, 14 percent were ethnically Chinese and four percent were ethnically Indian. The majority (61 percent) were just beginning to consider studying abroad, while 39 percent had already decided to study abroad.

The largest proportion of respondents (42 percent) was interested in pursuing graduate study abroad (e.g., MA, MS, PhD, etc.), while 28 percent were interested in a professional degree (e.g., MBA, JD, MD, etc.), 22 percent were interested in an undergraduate degree, 14 percent were interested in a two-year degree or certificate and nine percent was interested in short-term non-degree study. Respondents could select more than one level of study. Eighteen percent of respondents were undecided as to what level of studies they wished to pursue abroad.

Preparing for a future career in a foreign country or foreign company was the most popular reason cited for studying abroad (48 percent of respondents), followed by the cultural experience (42 percent) and making professional contacts (25 percent).

Cost was perceived as a major obstacle to study abroad by 70 percent of respondents. Other obstacles included gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (28 percent), cultural differences (also 28 percent), studying in a different language (26 percent) and distance from home or family (21 percent).

The intended fields of study of prospective students from Malaysia were more evenly distributed than from other places of origin, with 34 percent interested in business and management, 25 percent interested in engineering, another 25 percent in math or computer science, 20 percent in foreign language study, 18 percent in physical or life sciences, 18 percent in the arts, 17 percent in education, 15 percent in the social sciences and 13 percent in the humanities. Respondents could report more than one intended field of study.

The destination of choice for the majority of respondents was the United States, with 60 percent listing the U.S. as their first-choice destination in an open-ended question. The United Kingdom was the second most popular destination, with 11 percent, followed by Japan (eight percent) and Australia (six percent) (Fig. 15).

Among possible alternate destinations if their first choice was not available, 22 percent listed the U.S., followed by the U.K. (20 percent) and Australia (11 percent).

In 2010, the top five overseas countries where Malaysian students actually enrolled were (in rank order) Australia, the United Kingdom, Egypt, the United States and Indonesia (*Project Atlas*, 2010).

Compared to four other popular study abroad destinations for Malaysian students (the U.K., Australia, Canada and Japan), the U.S. was considered by respondents to be the most welcoming to international students, to have the most scholarship opportunities and to have the widest range of schools and programs (Fig. 16). Respondents also rate the U.S. higher than the other destinations for the high quality of the higher education system and the good student support services, although the difference between the U.S. and the other countries was not as pronounced for these dimensions.

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Unlike in many other countries where students themselves are the most important decision makers regarding their future educational plans, the majority (55 percent) of Malaysian students indicated that their parents were the most important influence on their educational decisions. About 31 percent indicated that they themselves were the primary decision makers, eight percent indicated teachers or professors were the most important influence and three percent each indicated friends or classmates and counselors or advisers.

Respondents cited the Fulbright/EducationUSA advising team as their top source of information about studying in the U.S. (44 percent), followed closely by parents, friends or classmates (41 percent) and teachers, professors or school advisers/staff (39 percent).

**Figure 15: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Malaysia**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	60.4%	21.7%
United Kingdom	10.7%	20.3%
Japan	8.0%	8.2%
Australia	6.4%	11.1%
Germany	4.8%	7.2%
South Korea	2.7%	3.9%
Canada	2.1%	7.2%
Egypt	2.1%	2.4%
All Others	2.8%	18.0%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 16: Percent of Students in Malaysia Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Canada	Japan
Welcomes international students	56.2	30.0	23.3	17.1	15.7
Many scholarship opportunities	54.3	24.8	17.1	6.2	12.4
Wide range of schools and programs	52.9	29.5	17.6	9.0	11.4
High quality higher education system	49.5	31.9	16.2	13.8	21.9
Good student support services	46.7	24.3	18.1	11.4	15.2
High cost of living	42.9	36.2	28.1	18.6	27.6
Costly school application process	41.9	26.2	18.6	15.2	17.6
Expensive tuition	38.6	32.9	25.2	13.3	23.3
Safe place to study	34.3	17.1	22.4	17.6	11.0
Difficult to get a student visa	26.7	22.4	18.1	18.1	17.6
Language barrier	18.1	11.0	13.3	11.4	43.8

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### Nepal

**N**epal is the sixteenth leading place of origin of international students in the U.S. There were 8,155 Nepalese students studying in the U.S. in 2013/14, a 9 percent decline from the previous year's total of 8,910, and a 25 percent decline from the 2008/09 total of 11,581, which was a record high. The majority of students from Nepal are studying at the undergraduate level (41 percent), with 37 percent studying at the graduate level and the remainder enrolled in non-degree programs or participating in optional practical training (OPT).

In spring 2012, IIE collaborated with EducationUSA and the U.S. Educational Foundation in Nepal to survey prospective students in Nepal on their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. as a potential study destinations in comparison to other destinations. Students were also asked about the obstacles they faced with regard to studying abroad, their intended field of study, their reasons for wishing to study abroad and their primary sources of information on studying in the U.S.

Among respondents from Nepal, 69 percent were male and 31 percent female. Over half (59 percent) had already decided to study in another country at the time of the survey, while 41 percent were just beginning to consider studying overseas.

Survey respondents were primarily interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree abroad (57 percent), followed by a graduate degree such as a master's or PhD (38 percent), or a professional degrees such as an MBA or MD (12 percent). Respondents could indicate interest in more than one level of study.

Preparing for a future career/better career prospects was the reason cited by 82 percent of respondents as their main

reason for wishing to study in another country. In addition, 28 percent wished to study overseas because their degree or research program was not available at home. About ten percent cited making professional contacts as their main reason for studying abroad. Respondents could indicate more than one reason for studying abroad.

Students in Nepal were very interested in studying science and technology fields. Engineering was the most popular intended field of study, selected by 35 percent of respondents, followed by business and management (26 percent), physical or life sciences (16 percent) mathematics and computer science (13 percent) and health professions (ten percent).

The United States was the most popular first-choice destination for overseas study, cited by 91 percent of respondents in an open response question (Fig. 17). The United Kingdom was the second most popular first-choice destination, with two percent of the total, followed by Australia (also two percent) and Canada (one percent).

Among alternate destinations if their first choice destination was not available, Australia was the most popular choice, with 34 percent of respondents listing Australia as an alternate choice followed by the U.K. (22 percent), Canada (20 percent) and Germany (12 percent). Nine percent of respondents selected the U.S. as an alternate destination if their first choice was not available.

Compared to other popular study destinations for students from Nepal, the U.S. was perceived as a study destination with a high quality higher education system and a wide range of schools and programs. Nepalese students are also aware of the many scholarship opportunities that are available to them and see they U.S. as a country that is welcoming to international students (Fig. 18). However, students also perceived that it is difficult to obtain a visa to study in the U.S. (67 percent) and that tuition is expensive (58 percent).

The greatest perceived obstacle for students from Nepal wishing to study overseas (regardless of destination) was cost, cited by 75 percent of respondents. Other perceived obstacles included gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (43 percent) and obtaining a visa (36 percent).

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About 43 percent of respondents cited themselves as the person with the most influence over their educational decisions. Parents or other family members were the strongest influence for 27 percent of respondents, and teachers or professors were cited by 16 percent as their most important influence.

Over three-fourths (77 percent) of respondents cited the USEF-Nepal EducationUSA Advising Center, higher education fairs, events, Facebook page, e-group and website as their top source of information on studying in the U.S. About 42 percent cited friends or classmates as one of their main sources of information, 32 percent cited parents or relatives and 30 percent cited teachers or professors.

**Figure 17: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Nepal**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	91.4%	9.3%
United Kingdom	2.3%	21.7%
Australia	1.9%	34.1%
Canada	1.1%	19.7%
Germany	0.6%	12.1%
India	0.4%	9.6%
Other European countries	1.5%	18.4%
Other Asian countries	0.6%	7.8%
Other	0.2%	1.0%
None	-	10.9%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 18: Percent of Students in Nepal Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Japan	India	China
High quality higher education system	90.0	35.2	19.4	11.7	10.6	3.3
Wide range of schools and programs	81.9	22.3	15.4	5.0	12.7	3.8
Many scholarship opportunities	75.4	8.3	13.5	5.2	9.8	4.0
Welcomes international students	71.5	21.0	33.8	13.5	17.7	8.1
Good student support services	67.9	14.6	18.1	7.5	5.6	2.3
Difficult to get a student visa	66.7	33.5	11.5	9.0	0.4	4.8
Safe place to study	60.4	21.0	26.0	15.4	10.8	7.3
Expensive tuition	57.7	55.2	25.6	9.2	2.9	3.5
Costly application process	49.8	40.8	17.3	5.4	3.1	1.9
High cost of living	47.1	64.6	22.3	18.1	0.8	2.1
Language barrier	4.3	2.9	2.9	63.5	8.3	68.8



## III. Asia

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### South Korea

**S**outh Korea has been among the top three places of origin of international students in the U.S. since 2001/02, when the number of students from South Korea overtook the number coming from Japan. There were 68,047 South Korean students studying in the U.S. in 2013/14, a 3.7 percent decline from the previous year's total.

In fall and winter 2011, IIE collaborated with EducationUSA and the Korean Fulbright Commission to survey prospective overseas students in South Korea on their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. and other potential study destinations. Students were also asked about the obstacles they faced with regard to studying abroad, their preferred destinations, their intended field of study, their reasons for wishing to study abroad and their primary sources of information on studying in the U.S.

Among respondents from South Korea, 54 percent were male and 46 percent were female. Over half (52 percent) had already decided to study overseas at the time of the survey, while 47 percent were just beginning to consider studying overseas and one percent had already studied abroad.

The largest proportion of respondents cited the cultural experience as their main reason for wishing to study in another country (49 percent), followed by preparing for a future career abroad or in a foreign-based company (45 percent) and making professional contacts overseas (35 percent). Percentages do not total 100 as respondents could indicate more than one reason for studying abroad.

Prospective students were interested in pursuing a variety of different types of study, including academic graduate degrees such as a master's or PhD (45 percent), professional

graduate degrees such as an MBA or MD (19 percent), undergraduate degrees (17 percent) and short-term non-degree study (10 percent). Respondents could indicate interest in more than one level of study.

Business and management was the most popular intended field of study, selected by 28 percent of respondents, followed by the social sciences (19 percent), intensive English and other language study (19 percent) and fine or applied arts (15 percent). A much higher proportion of South Korean students in the U.S. are studying the arts as compared with students from other countries in Asia.

The United States was the most popular first-choice destination listed in an open response question, with 72 percent of respondents citing the U.S. as their first-choice destination (Fig. 19). The United Kingdom was the second most popular first-choice destination, with seven percent of the total, followed by Australia and France with four percent each.

Among alternate destinations if their first choice destination was not available, the United Kingdom was the most popular, with 37 percent of respondents listing the U.K. as an alternate choice followed by the U.S. (16 percent), Canada (11 percent) and Australia (nine percent).

Compared to four other popular study destinations for Korean students, the U.S. was perceived as a study destination with a wide range of schools and programs and a high quality higher education system, and that is welcoming to international students (Fig. 20). The U.S. was also seen as the most expensive destination, both in terms of tuition and the school application process. However, the majority of respondents (58 percent) are aware of the many scholarship opportunities that are available to assist prospective international students.

The greatest perceived obstacle for South Koreans wishing to study overseas (regardless of destination) was cost, cited by 81 percent of respondents. Other perceived obstacles included studying in a different language (37 percent), cultural difference (30 percent), gaining acceptance to the



### III. Asia

institution of their choice (30 percent) and distance from home or family (25 percent).

The majority (76 percent) of respondents said they were the most important influence in their own educational decision-making. Teachers or professors were cited by eight percent as their most important influence, and parents or relatives and friends or classmates were cited by six percent each.

Respondents cited the internet and news media as their top source of information on studying in the U.S. (36 percent), followed closely by their friends or classmates (34 percent) and teachers or professors (30 percent). Twenty percent of respondents cited the Fulbright/EducationUSA advising office, fairs, events and website as one of their top sources of information.

**Figure 19: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from South Korea**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	72.4%	16.2%
United Kingdom	7.4%	37.4%
Australia	4.1%	9.0%
France	3.5%	5.2%
Canada	2.5%	10.8%
Germany	1.5%	4.9%
"Europe"	1.4%	2.9%
Japan	1.1%	5.8%
New Zealand	1.1%	1.1%
China	0.6%	2.7%
All Others	4.4%	-
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 20: Percent of Students in South Korea Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Germany	Japan	China
Wide range of schools and programs	80.0	21.4	12.1	8.3	4.0	1.6
High quality higher education system	77.9	36.0	9.2	14.9	8.7	1.3
Expensive tuition	70.2	33.7	5.9	8.1	12.1	2.9
Costly school application process	65.4	22.7	5.2	6.0	9.0	2.7
Many scholarship opportunities	57.9	13.3	14.4	15.6	6.0	6.2
Good student support services	55.7	19.8	17.6	19.2	7.0	1.7
Welcomes international students	54.9	16.2	26.3	9.8	10.0	6.2
High cost of living	52.5	46.8	8.1	12.7	28.9	2.4
Difficult to get a student visa	50.2	12.5	15.9	7.1	23.5	19.4
Language barrier	30.0	14.4	10.3	45.6	28.4	43.8
Safe place to study	24.1	21.9	34.1	19.2	25.9	2.5

## III. Asia

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### Thailand

**T**hailand is currently the third leading place of origin in Southeast Asia (after Vietnam and Indonesia), the tenth place of origin in all of Asia and the 20th leading place of origin worldwide of international students studying in the U.S. In 2013/14, 7,341 students from Thailand were studying at U.S. colleges and universities, a .04 percent increase from the previous year's total.

Thirty-seven percent of Thai students are studying in undergraduate degree programs, 45 percent are studying in graduate degree programs, eight percent are studying in non-degree programs and ten percent are participating in Optional Practical Training (OPT).

In spring 2010, IIE's office in Bangkok conducted online and paper surveys of prospective international students in Thailand regarding their attitudes and perceptions of higher education in the U.S. and other potential host destinations. Students were also asked about their preferred study destinations, field of study, perceived obstacles facing overseas study, reasons for wishing to studying overseas and primary sources of information on U.S. study.

A total of 1,103 valid responses were received from five regions of Thailand: Bangkok (Central Thailand), the East, the North, the Northeast and the South. Just under half (46 percent) of the responses were from Bangkok; 65 percent of respondents were female and 35 percent were male.

Half (50 percent) were interested in pursuing graduate and/or professional studies abroad, about one quarter were interested in an undergraduate degree (23 percent

in a bachelor's degree and four percent in an associate's degree), and 35 percent were also interested in language study abroad (respondents could select more than one choice).

The most popular reason for wishing to study in another country was to improve foreign language skills (cited by 54 percent of respondents). Quality or type of academic program abroad was cited by 40 percent, 34 percent indicated preparing for a future career and 32 percent indicated the cultural experience (respondents could select more than one choice).

Business and management was the most popular field of study (chosen by 25 percent of the total), followed by physical and life sciences (15 percent), engineering and humanities (12 percent each).

The most frequently cited first-choice destination was the United States, with 55 percent of respondents listing the U.S. as their preferred destination in an open-ended question (Fig. 21). The United Kingdom was the second most cited first-choice destination, with 19 percent of the total, followed by Australia (seven percent) and Japan (six percent). Other potential host destinations received less than five percent of the total.

The United Kingdom was the most popular alternative destination, with 34 percent of the total, followed by the U.S. with 24 percent and Australia with 12 percent. Eight percent each were interested in studying in Japan or in Continental Europe as an alternative if their first-choice was not available.

The majority of respondents perceived the U.S. to have a wide range of schools and programs (71 percent) and be welcoming to international students (70 percent) (Fig. 22). The majority of respondents also felt the U.S. to have a high quality higher education system (65 percent) and many opportunities for student scholarships (61 percent). The percentages reported for the U.S. for all four of the above dimensions are significantly higher than those reported for the other four potential host destinations (the U.K., Australia, Japan and Germany).

### III. Asia

However, many respondents also felt that it is difficult to get a visa to study in the U.S. (57 percent - the highest among the five potential host destinations) and that tuition in the U.S. is expensive (54 percent - about equal to the 53 percent reported for the U.K., and significantly higher than the percentages reported for the other potential host destinations).

Almost 60 percent of respondents cited cost as a major obstacle to studying overseas, regardless of destination. Other obstacles cited were language difficulties (43 percent), finding accurate information (25 percent), cultural differences (18 percent) and distance from home or family (18 percent).

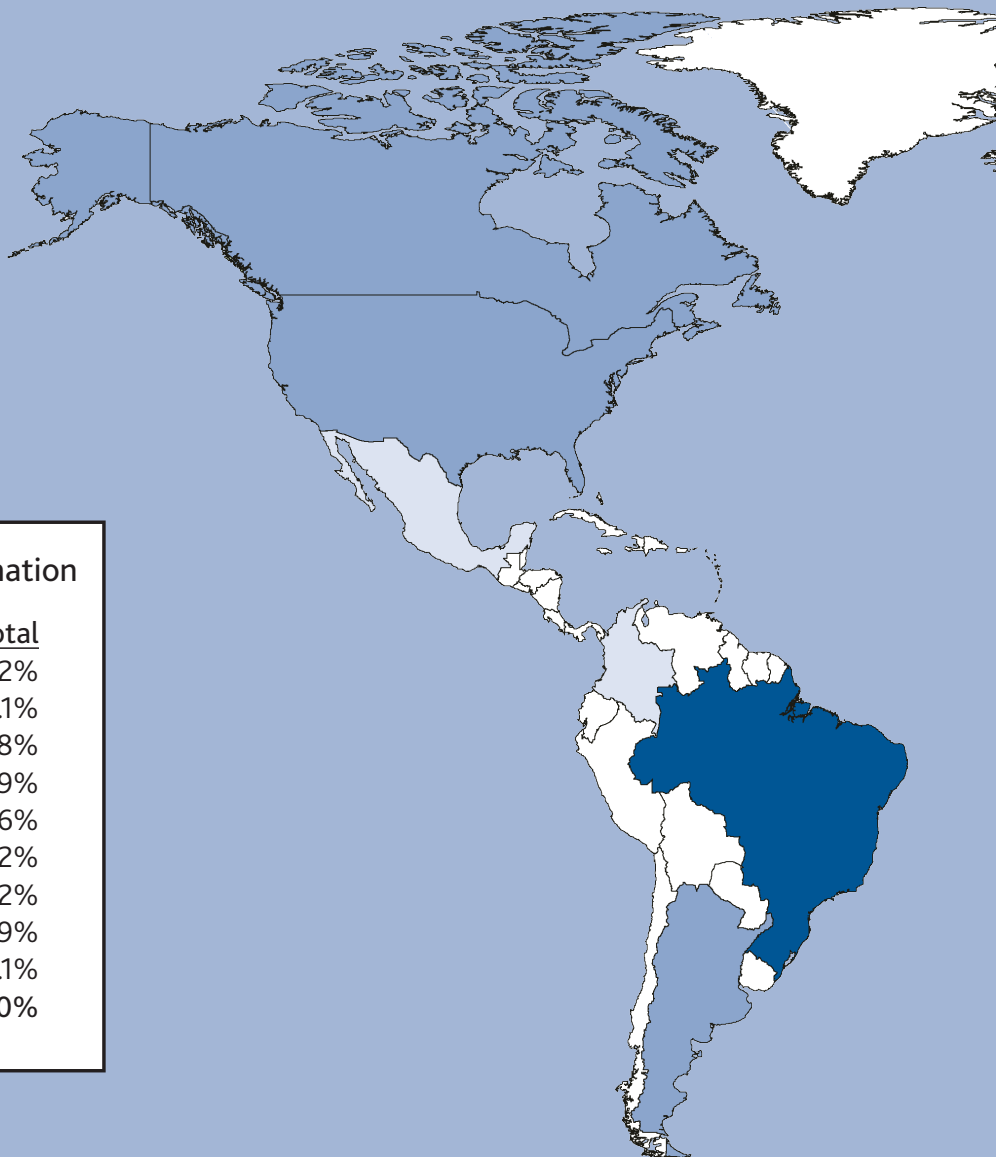
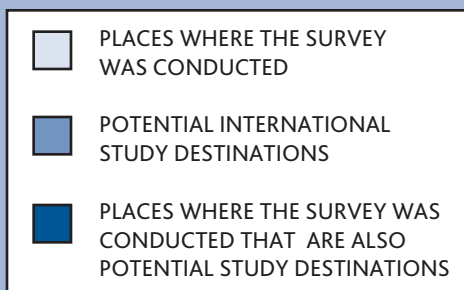
**Figure 21: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Thailand**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	55.0%	24.1%
United Kingdom	18.9%	34.3%
Australia	7.2%	12.2%
Japan	6.3%	7.8%
Continental Europe	4.4%	8.0%
Asia	4.0%	5.5%
New Zealand	2.5%	3.4%
Canada	1.6%	4.9%
Other	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 22: Percent of Students in Thailand Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Japan	Germany
Wide range of schools and programs	71.2	42.6	27.0	14.2	10.1
Welcomes international students	70.1	33.9	39.5	20.4	15.7
High quality higher education system	65.1	49.4	19.6	18.6	14.2
Many scholarship opportunities	60.5	27.0	19.0	19.5	10.9
Difficult to get a student visa	57.0	31.0	9.4	18.1	10.8
Expensive tuition	53.8	53.3	13.2	20.7	13.1
High cost of living	50.4	55.1	13.6	29.0	14.5
Complicated application process	49.2	30.9	12.0	18.0	13.8
Safe place to study	31.8	39.6	22.8	23.8	14.0
Language barrier	26.5	18.7	11.5	51.9	40.2

# What International Students Think About U.S. Higher Education:



## First Choice Study Abroad Destination

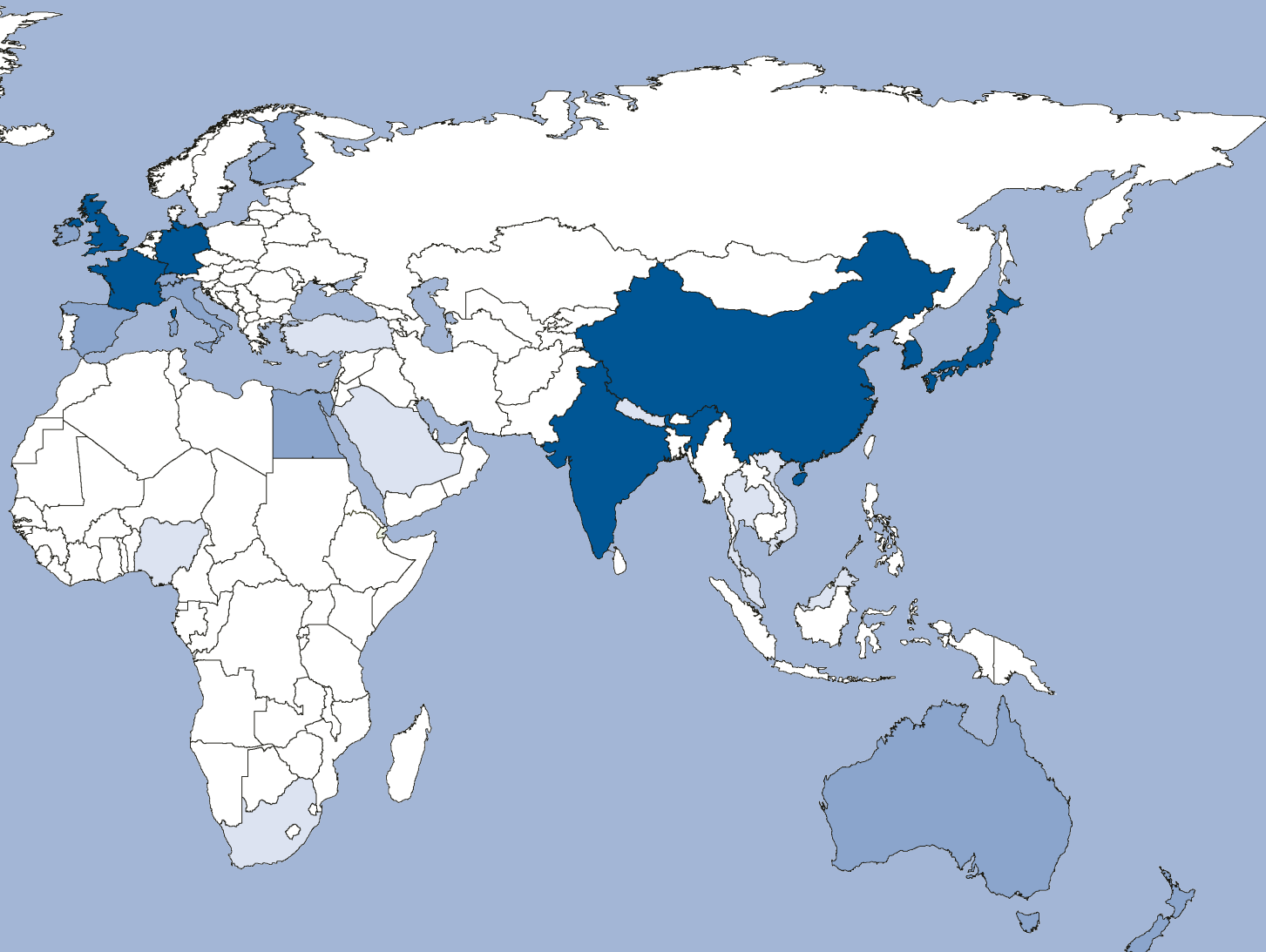
Destination	% of Total
United States	74.2%
United Kingdom	8.1%
Canada	4.8%
Australia	2.9%
France	1.6%
Spain	1.2%
Germany	1.2%
Japan	0.9%
Other	5.1%
TOTAL (N=15,902)	100.0%

## Percent of Respondents Who Felt the Characteristic Applied to the Study Destination

Characteristic	U.S.	Australia	U.K.	Canada	France	Germany
Wide range of schools and programs	78.3	19.5	33.5	25.9	21.2	21.1
High quality higher education system	77.0	18.9	49.1	31.8	32	33
Welcomes international students	67.7	33.8	29.8	39.6	26	28.1
Tuition is expensive	61.9	18.1	51.1	21.6	22.9	17.2
Many scholarship opportunities	59.4	14.7	16.7	20.3	13.3	17.4
Good student support services	56.8	19.3	24.7	30.4	18.7	23.5
Difficult or complex visa procedures	50.3	12.7	24	14.6	12.2	10.4
Safe place to study	45.6	33.3	35.9	43.9	42.4	40.7
High cost of living	41.8	16.7	55.4	15.7	35.2	23.1
Language barrier	14.1	8.7	12.7	6.9	67.2	74.5
Number of responses	15,902	14,990	13,001	7,676	6,243	5,063

# A Survey of Prospective Students from Around the World

Conducted by IIE in cooperation with EducationUSA



## Current Student Mobility:

### Number of International Students by Host Destination, 2013

<u>United States</u>	<u>886,052</u>
<u>United Kingdom</u>	<u>481,050</u>
<u>China</u>	<u>356,499</u>
<u>France</u>	<u>295,092</u>
<u>Australia</u>	<u>282,201</u>
<u>Germany</u>	<u>247,093</u>
<u>Canada</u>	<u>237,635</u>
<u>Japan</u>	<u>135,519</u>

Source: *Project Atlas*

### International Students in the U.S., 2013/14

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Students</u>
Brazil	13,286	Nepal	8,155
Colombia	7,083	Nigeria	7,921
China	235,597	Saudi Arabia	53,919
France	8,302	South Africa	1,716
Germany	10,160	South Korea	68,047
Hong Kong	8,104	Thailand	7,341
India	102,673	Turkey	10,821
Japan	19,334	United Kingdom	10,191
Malaysia	6,822	Vietnam	16,579
Mexico	14,779		

Source: *Open Doors*

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### Vietnam

**V**ietnam has experienced one of the largest and fastest growth rates for international students coming to the U.S. over the past decade. The number of students from Vietnam studying at U.S. colleges and universities increased sixfold during this period, from 2,722 students in 2002/03 to 16,579 students in 2013/14. This increase took place largely between 2006 and 2009, with annual percentage increases of 46 percent in 2008/09 and 45 percent in 2007/08, following an increase of 31 percent in 2006/07. During the same period, the average rate of increase for all places of origin ranged from three percent in 2006/07 to eight percent in 2008/09.

As a consequence of this rapid growth, Vietnam entered the top 20 places of origin of international students in the U.S. in 2006/07 at 20th place, moving up to 13th place in 2007/08 and to eighth place in 2010/11. While the growth rate slowed to three percent in 2013/14, Vietnam remains in eighth place, just ahead of Mexico and behind Japan. At community colleges, Vietnam is the third leading place of origin, after China and South Korea. About 72 percent of students from Vietnam are studying in undergraduate degree programs, 16 percent are studying in graduate degree programs, five percent are in non-degree programs and seven percent are participating in Optional Practical Training (OPT).

IIE conducted an online survey in March 2009 of 707 prospective students in Vietnam who had visited the U.S. Department of State-funded EducationUSA advising centers in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi and/or had attended one of the IIE Higher Education Fairs in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi or Danang. Students were surveyed regarding their preferred study destinations, reasons for wishing to study abroad, perceived obstacles, main sources of information on studying in the U.S. and their impressions of five potential host destinations (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France and Singapore).

The U.S. was the overwhelming first-choice destination for respondents in Vietnam, with 82 percent of respondents listing the U.S. in an open-ended question, followed by eight percent for Australia and five percent for the U.K. (Fig. 23). Australia led among alternative destinations, with 31 percent of the total, followed by the United Kingdom (21 percent) and Singapore (14 percent).

The most important reason cited for studying abroad was the quality or type of academic program. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that this was one of their main reasons for wishing to study abroad. The cultural experience and improving language skills were selected by two-thirds of respondents and just over half of respondents indicated that preparing for a future career in a foreign country or foreign-based company and obtaining a degree were main reasons for studying abroad. Almost nine out of every ten respondents (89 percent) felt that good English language ability would aid them in a future job search and over 70 percent also felt that an international degree or international experience would aid them in their future job search.

Cost was the most frequently cited obstacle to being able to study in another country (cited by 84 percent of respondents), followed by finding accurate information (46 percent), obtaining a visa (36 percent), the language barrier (35 percent) and cultural differences (33 percent).

Over three-quarters of respondents (77 percent) indicated that the internet was one of their top three main sources of information on study in the U.S., followed by the EducationUSA advising center or U.S. embassy/consulate (51 percent), U.S. higher education fairs or information sessions (48 percent), friends or classmates (30 percent), foreign recruiters or school representatives (21 percent) and teachers or professors (19 percent).

The U.S. was perceived by most respondents to have a wide range of schools and programs (92 percent) and a high quality higher education system (88 percent), and

### III. Asia

be welcoming to international students and to have many scholarships opportunities (72 percent each) (Fig. 24).

However, many respondents also felt that the U.S. was an expensive place to study, with high tuition costs (71 percent) and a high cost of living (70 percent). The U.S. was also perceived to be a less safe place to study than other destinations such as Singapore and Australia.

While 61 percent of respondents indicated that they felt the U.S. had difficult procedures for obtaining a student visa, only 18 percent of respondents indicated that they had previously applied for a visa.

The majority of respondents (63 percent) indicated that they themselves were the strongest influence on their educational decisions. About one-fifth (19 percent) indicated that their parents were the most important influence, eight percent reported teachers or professors and four percent reported friends or classmates.

**Figure 23: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Vietnam**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	81.8%	10.4%
Australia	7.7%	30.7%
United Kingdom	5.0%	20.8%
Canada	1.1%	7.4%
Singapore	0.9%	13.5%
Other Europe	2.2%	7.8%
France	0.7%	2.4%
Japan	0.4%	3.9%
Other	0.2%	3.1%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 24: Percent of Students in Vietnam Who Agree the Statement Applies to the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Singapore	France
Wide range of schools and programs	91.7	49.2	48.4	27.0	16.6
High quality higher education system	88.2	63.8	32.0	24.6	14.8
Welcomes international students	72.3	33.3	64.7	60.3	24.8
Many scholarship opportunities	72.1	17.6	42.3	35.1	14.4
Expensive tuition	70.8	73.4	20.0	9.2	19.8
High cost of living	69.1	76.3	19.0	12.2	31.4
Difficult to get a student visa	60.8	29.2	6.3	1.1	11.5
Safe place to study	25.1	38.8	57.3	58.6	30.7
Language barrier	12.2	10.5	7.4	8.9	53.6



## IV. Europe

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**T**he 86,885 students from Europe studying in the U.S. in 2013/14 comprised 10 percent of the international student total (Open Doors, 2014). The top five European places of origin (in rank order) are the United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany, Sweden and France. European students in the U.S. participate in both undergraduate (40 percent) and graduate (33 percent) degree programs, as well as in non-degree programs (17 percent) and on Optional Practical Training (10 percent).

### France

**F**rance is the fourth leading place of origin of European students in the U.S. and the 15th leading place of origin of all international students in the U.S. In 2013/14, 8,302 students from France were studying at U.S. colleges and universities.

In summer and fall 2011, IIE collaborated with EducationUSA and the Franco-American Commission for Educational Exchange to conduct a survey of French students who were considering studying abroad. Respondents were asked about their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. and other potential host destinations as well as about the obstacles facing study abroad, their preferred destinations, intended fields of study, reasons for studying abroad and primary sources of information on U.S. study.

Among respondents from France, 58 percent were female and 42 percent were male. Most (56 percent) were just beginning to think about studying abroad, although a substantial number (41 percent) had already decided to study abroad. The remaining three percent had previously studied abroad and wished to do so again.

Main reasons for wishing to study abroad include preparing for a future career (cited by 75 percent of respondents), the cultural experience or improving foreign language skills

(65 percent each), and the quality or type of academic programs abroad (54 percent).

Half of the respondents (50 percent) were interested in pursuing a graduate degree abroad; 38 percent were interested in a professional degree (e.g., MBA, MD, JD, etc.); 35 percent were interested in foreign language study (including intensive English); 29 percent were interested in an undergraduate degree and 12 percent were interested in non-degree study (respondents could select more than one choice).

Business & management was the most popular intended field of study, chosen by 31 percent of respondents, followed by the social sciences (17 percent) and law (ten percent). Sixteen percent were interested in studying one or more of the STEM fields, including (in order of preference) engineering, mathematics or computer science, physical or life science and health professions.

The United States was the first-choice destination for study abroad by an enormous margin, with 74 percent of respondents indicating the U.S. in an open-response question. The United Kingdom was the next most cited first-choice destination (9 percent), followed by Canada (8 percent) (Fig. 25). No other destination received more than two percent of the total.

Among responses for alternate study abroad destinations if their first-choice was not available, 43 percent indicated the U.K., followed by Canada (35 percent), Australia (27 percent) and the United States (20 percent).

Compared to other potential study destinations, prospective study abroad students from France perceived the U.S. as having a wide range of schools and programs (cited by 85 percent of respondents), and a high quality higher education system (81 percent) (Fig. 26). However, the U.S. is also seen as having expensive tuition by 87 percent of respondents, and as having a costly school application process by 75 percent. In addition, 73 percent of French respondents perceived that it was difficult to obtain a student visa for the U.S., despite being from a Western European country with a low rate of visa refusals.



## IV. Europe

Both the U.S. and Canada were seen as countries that welcome international students, with the U.S. seen as having good student support services by more respondents than for the other countries.

Eighty percent of respondents cited the cost of studying abroad as a major obstacle, regardless of destination. This was the only obstacle cited by the majority of respondents. Other obstacles cited include the cost of the visa and school application process (36 percent), gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (33 percent) and finding accurate information (27 percent each). About 17 percent felt that obtaining a visa would be an obstacle and ten percent indicated that language was a barrier. Five percent of respondents indicated that there were no obstacles.

The top source of information on study in the U.S. cited was the EducationUSA advising center, higher education fairs and online services (75 percent). Other popular sources of information were the internet or news media (47 percent), teachers or professors (45 percent), friends or classmates (32 percent).

**Figure 25: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from France**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	73.8%	20.0%
United Kingdom	8.8%	42.9%
Canada	7.5%	34.7%
Australia	1.3%	26.9%
Germany	1.1%	5.5%
Spain	0.7%	6.0%
Switzerland	0.4%	3.5%
Japan	0.2%	6.5%
New Zealand	0.2%	5.7%
Ireland	0.2%	4.0%
All Others	5.8%	0.0%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 26: Percent of Students in France Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Canada	Germany	Switzerland
Expensive tuition	86.5	54.5	33.9	9.4	23.6
Wide range of schools and programs	84.8	39.9	43.3	19.5	13.5
High quality higher education system	80.9	53.9	44.8	24.2	26.4
Costly school application process	75.1	45.1	28.5	10.9	17.8
Difficult to get a student visa	73.4	11.2	23.6	6.2	13.1
Welcomes international students	68.7	37.8	63.7	25.3	16.3
Good student support services	57.1	35.8	46.1	27.3	24.5
Safe place to study	56.0	50.4	57.7	41.0	54.1
High cost of living	49.6	67.4	22.7	15.2	51.5
Many scholarships available	34.8	15.0	36.1	27.9	13.9
Cultural barrier	19.1	8.8	8.8	25.5	9.9
Language barrier	12.9	10.3	6.4	71.7	15.5

## IV. Europe

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### Germany

**G**ermany is the third leading European place of origin of international students in the U.S. and the 14th leading place of origin overall. In 2013/14, 10,160 German students were studying at U.S. colleges and universities, a four percent increase from the previous year.

In fall 2010, IIE worked with EducationUSA in Germany to survey prospective German students on their attitudes and perceptions of U.S. higher education and other potential host destinations. A total of 409 valid responses were received; 61 percent were from women and 39 percent were from men. The majority of respondents (59 percent) were just beginning to think about international study at the time of the survey, but 32 percent had already decided to study internationally and nine percent had already studied in another country.

The majority of respondents (59 percent) were just beginning to think about international study at the time of the survey, but 32 percent had already decided to study internationally and nine percent had already studied in another country.

The cultural experience was the reason cited by the most respondents (81 percent) when asked about their main reasons for wishing to study internationally. Other reasons cited were preparing for a future career (47 percent), making professional contacts (32 percent), the quality or type of academic programs abroad (28 percent) and improving foreign language skills (15 percent).

Respondents were interested in pursuing a variety of different types of study overseas, including language study (36 percent), graduate degrees (27 percent),

undergraduate degrees (17 percent), short-term exchanges or non-degree study (nine percent), internships or practical training (six percent), professional degrees, such as an MBA, JD or MD (five percent) and two-year degrees or certificates (four percent) (respondents could select more than one choice). About 19 percent were still undecided as to what type of study abroad they wished to pursue.

Business and management was the most popular intended field of study, chosen by one-fifth (20 percent) of respondents, followed the humanities (17 percent) and language study (16 percent). Education was selected by nine percent of respondents, social sciences by eight percent, physical and life sciences and engineering by seven percent each.

The United States was the most frequently cited first-choice destination in an open response question, with 54 percent of respondents listing the U.S. as their top choice (Fig. 27). The United Kingdom was the second most frequently cited first-choice destination, with 14 percent of the total, followed by France (six percent), Canada (four percent), Spain (three percent), Australia (two percent) and New Zealand (also two percent).

Among alternative study destinations, 29 percent each chose the U.S. and the U.K., with 19 percent choosing Canada, 18 percent choosing Australia, 11 percent choosing France and ten percent choosing New Zealand.

The majority of respondents felt that the U.S. welcomes international students (71 percent), has a wide range of schools and programs (66 percent) and has a high quality higher education system (57 percent). These are in most cases much higher percentages than were reported for the other host destinations (Fig. 28). Any respondents also felt that the U.S. offers many scholarship opportunities (47 percent) and has good student support services (43 percent).

However, the majority of respondents also felt that tuition in the U.S. is expensive (69 percent), and some felt that it is difficult to obtain a visa to study in the U.S.

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(43 percent) and that the school application process is costly (37 percent).

More than three-fourths of respondents (78 percent) cited the cost of study abroad as a major obstacle to international study, regardless of destination, followed by gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (44 percent) and finding accurate information (30 percent). Other obstacles cited included the cost of the visa and application process (22 percent), distance from home or family (19 percent), the language barrier (17 percent) and obtaining a visa (10 percent).

Respondents cited teachers and professors and the EducationUSA advising center as their top sources of information on study in the U.S. (35 percent each), followed by friends or classmates (30 percent), and the internet or news media (21 percent).

**Figure 27: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Germany**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	53.9%	29.4%
United Kingdom	14.0%	29.2%
France	5.7%	10.8%
Canada	4.0%	19.2%
Spain	3.2%	8.5%
Australia	2.4%	18.1%
New Zealand	1.9%	10.2%
Other Europe	9.2%	25.1%
Other	5.7%	23.3%
No alternate choice	n/a	1.6%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 28: Percent of Students in Germany Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	France	Netherlands	Switzerland	Austria
Welcomes international students	71.0	46.6	28.7	40.1	28.0	24.4
Expensive tuition	68.8	38.2	8.5	7.2	18.6	4.3
Wide range of schools and programs	66.4	31.2	17.1	18.1	15.2	10.4
High quality higher education system	57.2	57.2	20.3	22.9	36.7	14.5
Many scholarships available	47.1	18.6	8.0	7.0	4.3	4.8
Difficult to get a student visa	43.2	3.6	1.9	1.2	5.3	1.4
Good student support services	42.8	27.1	12.3	19.1	22.2	15.5
Costly application process	37.2	16.9	2.1	5.1	9.4	2.2
Safe place to study	36.5	36.5	31.2	34.5	39.1	36.5
High cost of living	30.4	45.7	22.2	8.0	48.8	11.1
Language barrier	5.1	3.1	42.3	36.2	6.0	2.9

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### Turkey

**T**urkey is the top European place of origin of international students in the U.S. and the eleventh leading place of origin worldwide. In 2013/14, there were 10,821 Turkish students studying at U.S. colleges and universities, a 4 percent decline from the previous year's total.

In fall 2010, IIE worked with EducationUSA, the Turkish Fulbright Commission and the Turkish-American Association in Ankara to survey Turkish students interested in coming to the U.S. to study regarding their attitudes and perceptions of U.S. higher education compared to other potential host destinations. Students were also asked about perceived obstacles to overseas study, preferred destinations, intended fields of study, reasons for wishing to study internationally and primary sources of information on studying in the U.S.

A total of 1,189 valid responses were received, about equally distributed among male and female respondents. Almost three-quarters (73 percent) had already decided to study overseas, while the remaining 27 percent were just beginning to consider international study.

Most respondents (71 percent) were interested in pursuing a graduate degree abroad; 28 percent were interested in non-degree foreign language study, 17 percent were interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree abroad, 14 percent were interested in a professional degree (e.g., MBA, JD, MD, etc.), and nine percent were interested in obtaining a two-year degree or certificate (respondents could select more than one choice).

The main reason cited for wishing to study in another country was the quality or type of academic programs available (cited by 69 percent of respondents), followed by

the cultural experience (51 percent), preparing for a future career (43 percent) and making professional contacts (42 percent).

The most popular intended field of study was engineering, chosen by 21 percent of respondents, followed social sciences (19 percent), business and/or management (12 percent) and education (10 percent). Physical or life sciences were chosen by seven percent, mathematics or computer science by six percent and fine or applied arts by four percent.

The U.S. was the preferred destination listed by 82 percent of respondents in an open-response question. The United Kingdom was the second most cited first-choice destination, with nine percent of the total, followed by Germany (two percent) (Fig. 29).

The United Kingdom was the most cited alternative destination, with 64 percent of respondents considering the U.K. as a possible second-choice if their first choice was not available. Germany followed with 32 percent, and Canada with 27 percent. About 14 percent chose the U.S. as a possible alternate destination. The majority (78 percent) of the respondents who did not select the U.S. as their first-choice destination did select it as an alternate choice.

The U.S. was considered a welcoming country for international students by about three-quarters (74 percent) of respondents (Fig. 30). Over two-thirds (67 percent) felt that the U.S. has a high quality higher education system, and 61 percent felt that the U.S. has a wide range of schools and programs.

However, half of respondents also felt that tuition in the U.S. is expensive (51 percent), and about one-third felt that the school application process is expensive (35 percent) and the cost of living in the U.S. is expensive (32 percent). Just over one-fifth (22 percent) felt that it is difficult to obtain a visa to study in the U.S. Eleven percent felt that American English presented a significant language barrier.

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When asked about potential obstacles to international study, 76 percent of respondents cited cost as a major obstacle, regardless of destination. About one-third cited gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (36 percent) and the cost of the visa and application process (32 percent), and just over one quarter cited finding accurate information as a major obstacle (26 percent).

**Figure 29: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Turkey**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	82.3%	13.5%
United Kingdom	9.3%	64.0%
Germany	2.0%	32.0%
Spain	1.3%	15.2%
France	1.2%	16.7%
Canada	1.1%	26.6%
Australia	0.2%	13.8%
Other Europe	1.9%	42.8%
Other	0.7%	10.4%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 30: Percent of Students in Turkey Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Continental Europe	Turkic Republics
Welcomes international students	74.0	44.0	26.2	44.4	21.2
High quality higher education system	67.4	55.8	20.0	40.6	5.7
Wide range of schools and programs	61.2	40.1	20.3	40.8	9.5
Expensive tuition	50.6	52.8	16.9	25.8	8.2
Good student support services	39.1	25.1	25.1	14.5	8.2
Many scholarship opportunities	36.8	13.5	16.2	8.1	6.0
Costly application process	35.3	31.3	18.8	13.6	4.6
High cost of living	31.8	43.5	22.5	14.0	5.7
Safe place to study	24.4	33.1	24.6	14.6	12.2
Difficult to get a student visa	22.1	26.1	11.9	8.2	1.6
Language barrier	10.7	9.7	11.7	7.5	5.6

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### United Kingdom

**T**he United Kingdom is the second ranked place of origin of students from Europe, and the 13th leading place of origin of international students in the U.S. overall. In 2013/14, there were 10,191 British students studying at U.S. colleges and universities, an increase of 7.6 percent over the prior year.

In fall 2010, IIE collaborated with EducationUSA and the U.S.-U.K. Fulbright Commission to conduct a survey of prospective British students regarding their attitudes and perceptions of U.S. higher education compared to other potential host destinations. Students were also asked about perceived obstacles to international study, preferred study destinations, intended major or field of study, reasons for wishing to study overseas and primary sources of information on studying in the U.S. During the 2010 survey 1,598 valid student responses received.

In December 2010, the U.K. passed a measure allowing universities to increase undergraduate tuition to up to £9,000 per year, almost triple the previous rate of £3,290 per year, triggering protests from thousands of students. In light of these developments, IIE once again collaborated with EducationUSA and the U.S.-U.K. Fulbright Commission in fall 2011 to collect data on whether the attitudes and perceptions of British students had changed compared to survey results from fall 2010, prior to the announced fee hikes. A total of 1,303 valid responses from UK students were received in 2011. The total number of valid responses received from UK students in 2010 and 2011 was 2,901.

Of the survey responses received in 2010 and 2011, 58 percent were from female respondents and 41 percent were from male respondents. Close to half (48 percent) were interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree abroad, 36 percent were interested in a graduate and/or professional degree abroad and 18 percent were interested in short-term study abroad as part of their U.K. degree (respondents could select more than one type of study). There was a substantial increase from 2010 to 2011 in the proportion of students seeking short-term study abroad, increasing from 8 percent among 2010 respondents to 31 percent in 2011. Ten percent of students in 2010 and 2011 were undecided as to the type of study they wished to pursue abroad.

The cultural experience was the most frequently cited reason for studying abroad (78 percent of respondents), followed by enhancing the CV (54 percent), preparing for a future career (52 percent), and the quality or type of academic program (47 percent). Most of these percentages remained level from 2010 to 2011; however, in 2011 15 percent of respondents indicated that rising tuition at British universities was a main reason for wishing to study abroad, and an additional seven percent indicated that limited places at British universities was a main reason for studying abroad.

Social science was the most popular intended field of study, chosen by 28 percent of respondents, followed by the humanities (22 percent), business and management (22 percent), physical or life science (16 percent), fine or applied arts (13 percent), math or computer science (ten percent), engineering (eight percent) and education (six percent).

The United States was the most popular first-choice destination by an overwhelming margin, with 86 percent of respondents listing the U.S. as their first-choice destination in an open-ended question (Fig. 31). Australia and Canada were the next most popular first-choice destinations, each with three percent of the total, followed by France with one percent. If the first-choice destination was not available, 31 percent of respondents preferred to stay in the U.K. rather than study in another destination. In 2010, 28 percent of respondents indicated

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that they would prefer to stay in the UK if their first choice destination was not available, and this proportion grew to 36 percent in 2011. The most popular alternate destinations were Canada (20 percent) and Australia (18 percent). Eight percent chose the U.S. as an alternate destination.

Compared to the U.K. and to other potential study destinations, the U.S. was perceived as having a wide range of schools and programs, and a high quality higher education system by over 80 percent of respondents, significantly higher than the other host destinations (Fig. 32). The U.S. was also rated highly for being welcoming to international students and having many scholarship opportunities. The U.S. was rated about equally with the U.K. with regard to safety and student support services. Respondents also felt tuition in the U.S. to be expensive and the school application process to be complex and costly. In addition, 51 percent of respondents felt that it is difficult to obtain a visa to study in the U.S., despite the U.K. being a Western European country with low visa denial rates.

**Figure 31: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from the United Kingdom**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	86.1%	8.4%
Australia	2.9%	17.8%
Canada	2.8%	20.2%
France	1.1%	6.7%
Stay in UK	0.7%	31.4%
New Zealand	0.7%	3.4%
Other Europe	2.3%	30.6%
Asia	1.3%	5.5%
Other	0.3%	1.4%
Latin America	0.2%	0.8%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 32: Percent of Students in the U.K. Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K. <sup>1</sup>	Ireland	Canada	Australia	France <sup>2</sup>	Germany <sup>2</sup>	Netherlands <sup>1</sup>
Wide range of schools & programs	89.1	57.0	12.1	30.4	23.0	16.8	17.3	13.0
High quality higher educ. system	81.7	73.6	20.4	35.7	25.2	21.9	25.1	22.4
Welcomes international students	80.3	64.8	29.7	42.7	39.6	26.0	26.7	31.1
Many scholarship opportunities	69.4	23.7	6.2	18.2	12.1	6.4	7.3	6.6
Expensive tuition	79.9	59.0	12.1	26.8	20.7	10.7	9.9	8.2
Complex or costly application process	64.3	19.4	6.1	21.2	17.0	5.8	5.3	11.0
Safe place to study	59.9	59.3	39.7	47.4	42.6	36.5	36.4	32.7
Good student support services	58.1	55.6	20.1	25.3	20.1	12.0	13.1	15.6
Difficult to get a visa	51.4	n/a	1.4	22.5	27.7	2.4	2.6	4.7
Too far from home	17.4	n/a	1.9	14.0	36.7	1.6	2.3	6.8
Too different culturally	3.2	n/a	4.4	3.0	4.7	23.2	27.5	30.1
Language barrier	1.4	n/a	2.4	2.4	1.3	60.8	67.6	60.8

<sup>1</sup>Based on 2011 responses only

<sup>2</sup>Based on 2010 responses only



## V. Latin America

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**T**he 72,318 students from Latin America (including Mexico and the Caribbean) comprised eight percent of the total international student population of 886,052 in the U.S. in 2013/14 (Open Doors, 2014). The top places of origin in Latin America are Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. The majority (53 percent) of students from Latin America are studying in undergraduate degree programs, with 27 percent enrolled in graduate degree programs and 20 percent in non-degree programs or Optional Practical Training (OPT).

### Brazil

**B**razil is the second leading place of origin in Latin America and the 10th leading place of origin worldwide of international students in the U.S. In 2013/14, 13,286 students from Brazil were studying at U.S. colleges and universities, an increase of 22 percent over the prior year. Recent growth in students from Brazil is driven by Brazilian government scholarship programs that fund students' overseas study. Of the Brazilian students in the U.S. in 2013/14, 38 percent studied at the undergraduate level, 23 percent at the graduate level and the remainder in non-degree programs and Optional Practical Training (OPT).

In fall 2010, IIE and EducationUSA in Brazil conducted a survey of Brazilian students who were considering studying internationally on their attitudes and perceptions of U.S. higher education and other potential host destinations. A total of 2,326 valid responses were received from across Brazil; 55 percent were from women and 45 percent were from men. Half (50 percent) had just begun to think about international study, while slightly less than half (48 percent) had already decided to study internationally, and the remainder had previously studied in another country and wished to do so again.

Half of respondents (50 percent) had just begun to think about international study, while slightly less than half (48 percent) had already decided to study internationally, and the remainder had previously studied in another country and wished to do so again.

The cultural experience was the main reason cited (by 70 percent of respondents), followed by the quality or type of academic programs abroad (56 percent), preparing for a future career (54 percent) and making professional contacts (33 percent) (respondents could cite more than one reason).

The majority of respondents (57 percent) were interested in pursuing foreign language study, particularly intensive English; 38 percent were interested in pursuing a graduate degree; 25 percent were interested in a professional degree (e.g., MBA, MD, JD, etc.) and 20 percent were interested in an undergraduate degree (respondents could select more than one choice).

Business and management was the most popular intended field of study, chosen by 19 percent of respondents, followed by intensive language study (16 percent), humanities (14 percent) and engineering (12 percent). Physical/life sciences were chosen by nine percent, education by eight percent, social sciences and fine/applied arts by six percent each, mathematics or computer science by five percent and other fields of study (including law, health professions and communications/journalism) by three percent.

The United States was the most frequently cited first-choice destination by a large margin, with 68 percent of respondents listing the U.S. in an open-response question. Canada was chosen by 13 percent and the United Kingdom by 11 percent (Fig. 33). No other destination received more than three percent of the total.

Among alternative destinations, 35 percent chose the United Kingdom, followed by Canada (29 percent) and the United States (18 percent).

Almost three-quarters of respondents perceived the U.S. to have a wide range of schools and programs (74 percent), a high quality higher education system (73 percent), to offer good student support services (63 percent) and to have many scholarship opportunities (also 63 percent). These are significantly higher than the percentages reported for the other host destinations (Fig. 34).

More than half of respondents also felt that the U.S. welcomes international students (55 percent) and is a safe place to study (54 percent).



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However, many respondents also felt that it is difficult to obtain a visa to study in the U.S. (59 percent), that tuition at U.S. colleges and universities is expensive (52 percent), that the school application process is costly (51 percent).

Two-thirds of respondents (66 percent) cited the cost of international study as a major obstacle, regardless of destination. Other significant obstacles were gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (28 percent), distance from home or family and finding accurate information (22 percent each), the cost of the visa and application process (21 percent), obtaining a visa (15 percent), language difficulties (14 percent), cultural differences (nine percent) and personal obstacles such as work and family obligations (two percent). Four percent of respondents indicated that there were no obstacles.

The top source of information on study in the U.S. cited was the EducationUSA advising center, higher education fairs and online services (45 percent), followed closely by the internet or news media (42 percent), teachers or professors (36 percent) and friends or classmates (33 percent).

**Figure 33: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Brazil**

<u>Destination</u>	<u>First Choice</u>	<u>Alternate Choice</u>
United States	67.6%	18.2%
Canada	12.5%	28.8%
United Kingdom	10.7%	34.7%
Australia	2.3%	12.9%
France	1.7%	9.9%
Germany	1.6%	6.6%
Other Europe	2.1%	15.3%
Other	1.5%	7.2%
No alternate choice	n/a	2.1%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 34: Percent of Students in Brazil Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>U.K.</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Australia</u>	<u>France</u>	<u>Argentina</u>
Wide range of schools and programs	74.4	30.1	26.0	15.3	14.1	5.5
High quality higher education system	73.0	50.0	33.1	16.7	27.0	3.5
Good student support services	62.9	28.3	32.6	21.3	15.4	6.1
Many scholarship opportunities	62.5	19.0	27.4	15.7	13.2	7.6
Difficult to get a student visa	59.0	25.7	9.1	7.7	14.6	1.4
Welcomes international students	55.3	23.0	39.6	31.3	12.0	19.6
Safe place to study	54.4	43.0	44.7	35.4	30.1	8.1
Expensive tuition	51.6	48.0	18.7	19.1	26.7	3.1
Costly application process	51.0	37.5	18.4	17.5	19.6	4.0
High cost of living	40.7	57.1	19.9	18.6	38.9	2.3
Language barrier	8.0	8.0	6.5	5.0	53.3	6.7

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### Colombia

**C**olombia is the third leading place of origin of Latin American students studying in the U.S., and the 22nd leading place of origin overall. In 2013/14, 7,083 students from Colombia were studying at U.S. colleges and universities, 8 percent more than during the previous academic year.

In summer 2011, IIE collaborated with EducationUSA and Fulbright Colombia to conduct a survey of Colombian students interested in studying in the U.S., regarding their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. as a study abroad destination compared to other potential host destinations. Students were also asked about the obstacles facing study abroad, preferred destinations, intended fields of study, reasons for studying abroad and primary sources of information on U.S. study.

There were 52 percent from male respondents and 48 percent from female respondents. About half (47 percent) had already decided to study abroad at the time of the survey, while almost the same number were just beginning to think about studying abroad. Six percent had already studied abroad.

The majority of respondents (74 percent) were interested in pursuing graduate and/or professional studies abroad, with 57 percent interested in master's degree programs, 42 percent interested in doctoral programs, and 34 percent interested in professional degrees (MBA, MD, JD, etc.). In addition, 21 percent were interested in certificate programs and 49 percent were interested in foreign language study, including intensive English, either independently or as part of a degree program (respondents could select more than one level of study). Only two percent were interested in an undergraduate degree.

The main reasons cited for wishing to study abroad include the quality or type of academic program (78 percent), the cultural experience (61 percent), making professional contacts (44 percent) and preparing for a future career abroad or in a foreign company (27 percent).

Business & management was the most popular intended field of study, chosen by 17 percent of respondents, followed closely by engineering (16 percent), physical or life science and social science (13 percent each) and intensive language study (ten percent).

The U.S. was the first-choice study abroad destination for 58 percent of respondents in an open-response question, the most of any destination country by a wide margin (Fig. 35). The United Kingdom was the second most popular first-choice destination, with nine percent of the total, followed by Spain (eight percent) and Canada (seven percent).

The United Kingdom was the most popular alternate destination, with 26 percent of the total, followed by the U.S. (21 percent), Spain and Canada (15 percent each) and Australia and Germany (10 percent each).

According to prospective students from Colombia, the greatest strengths of the U.S. higher education system are its diverse offerings and overall high quality. The U.S. was perceived to have a wide range of schools and programs by 85 percent of respondents in Colombia, and a high quality higher education system by 84 percent (Fig. 36). Both of these percentages are significantly higher than those of the other potential study destinations. However, the majority of respondents also perceived that tuition is expensive in the U.S. and that it is difficult for Colombians to get a student visa (70 percent each). While a similar proportion of respondents also felt tuition in the U.K. to be expensive (67 percent), not nearly as many felt that it would be difficult to obtain a student visa for the U.K. (43 percent).

The U.S. is also seen as a country that welcomes international students (by 60 percent) and that offers good student support services (by 56 percent), both much

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more so than the other study destinations included in the survey.

Cost was perceived as the greatest obstacle facing respondents, with 82 percent indicating that cost was a major barrier preventing them from being able to study abroad. Other perceived obstacles include gaining acceptance to the school of their choice (38 percent), finding accurate information (29 percent), the cost of the visa and school application process (28 percent), language (27 percent) and obtaining a visa (26 percent).

The top sources cited for information on study in the U.S. were the Internet or news media (52 percent), the EducationUSA advising center or Fulbright Colombia (48 percent), friends or classmates (39 percent) and teachers or professors (27 percent).

Figure 35: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Colombia

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	57.5%	20.9%
United Kingdom	8.5%	25.8%
Spain	7.7%	15.4%
Canada	6.9%	14.9%
Brazil	3.8%	6.4%
Germany	3.4%	9.5%
France	3.1%	8.4%
Argentina	2.5%	4.9%
Australia	1.3%	10.3%
All Others	5.3%	-
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

Figure 36: Percent of Students in Colombia Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination

	U.S.	U.K.	Spain	Germany	France	Australia
Wide range of schools and programs	85.0	46.7	37.4	33.0	29.4	24.5
High quality higher education system	83.9	64.0	28.6	53.0	42.1	29.0
Expensive tuition	70.3	67.3	22.6	31.9	29.6	31.8
Difficult to get a student visa	69.3	43.1	26.3	23.9	24.0	17.1
Safe place to study	65.8	57.5	35.3	49.7	48.9	51.1
Welcomes international students	60.4	32.9	31.7	26.9	27.2	43.6
Good student support services	56.0	28.2	25.9	27.6	25.3	29.9
Costly school application process	55.8	55.5	19.4	29.8	27.5	29.5
Many scholarship opportunities	55.2	13.3	37.3	29.5	18.5	19.8
High cost of living	51.9	72.7	34.7	46.6	47.8	36.5
Language barrier	29.4	24.9	2.3	68.8	54.9	21.6
Cultural barrier	13.9	24.8	9.3	49.0	28.5	17.2

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### Mexico

**M**exico is the top Latin American place of origin of international students studying in the U.S., and the ninth leading place of origin overall.

In 2013/14, 14,779 Mexican students were studying at U.S. colleges and universities, an increase of two percent over the previous year's total. The majority (56 percent) are studying at the undergraduate level, 28 percent are studying at the graduate level and the remainder are enrolled in non-degree programs and Optional Practical Training (OPT).

In summer 2010, IIE and EducationUSA conducted a survey of Mexican students interested in studying in the U.S. regarding their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. as a study destination compared to other potential host destinations. A total of 285 valid responses were received. Respondents were drawn from four regions in Mexico: the Center (including Mexico City) (47 percent of respondents), the South (26 percent), the North (16 percent), the East (seven percent) and the West (four percent). About 33 percent of respondents were from Mexico City itself; 52 percent of respondents were female and 48 percent were male.

Respondents were drawn from four regions in Mexico: the Center (including Mexico City) (47 percent of respondents), the South (26 percent), the North (16 percent), the East (seven percent) and the West (four percent). About 33 percent of respondents were from Mexico City itself; 52 percent of respondents were female and 48 percent were male.

The majority of respondents (74 percent) were interested in pursuing graduate and/or professional studies abroad, with 34 percent also interested in language study (e.g., intensive English), 18 percent interested in undergraduate studies and 11 percent interested in an associate's degree or certificate program (respondents could select more than one choice).

Business and management was the most popular intended field of study, chosen by 28 percent of respondents, followed by engineering and social science (12 percent each) and education (10 percent).

The most frequently cited first-choice destination was the United States, with 59 percent of respondents listing the U.S. as their first-choice destination in an open-ended question. Spain was the next most often cited first-choice destination, with 11 percent of the total, followed by Canada with nine percent (Fig. 37). Male respondents and respondents from Mexico City were more likely than women and those outside Mexico City to choose the U.S. as their first choice, while those outside Mexico City were more likely to choose Spain and Canada.

The United Kingdom was the most popular alternative destination, with 16 percent of the total, followed closely by Canada and the U.S. (15 percent each) and Spain (12 percent). Among respondents who did not select the U.S. as their first-choice destination, 61 percent did select it as an alternate destination.

The U.S. was perceived to have a high quality higher education system by 87 percent of respondents, significantly higher than the other host destinations (Fig. 38). In addition, 86 percent of respondents felt the U.S. had a wide range of schools and programs and that the U.S. welcomes international students, also significantly higher than for the other host destinations. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents also felt that the U.S. offers good student support services, 61 percent felt that the U.S. was a safe place to study and 58 percent felt that there were many scholarship opportunities for study in the U.S.

However, almost three-quarters (74 percent) of respondents felt tuition in the the U.S. to be expensive, 64 percent felt that the school application process was costly and 51 percent felt that the cost of living in the U.S. was expensive. More than half of respondents (58 percent) felt that the process to obtain a student visa was complicated. About 16 percent felt that American English posed a language barrier, slightly higher than for British and Australian English.

The highest proportion of respondents (81 percent) cited cost as a major obstacle to international study, regardless of destination, followed by gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (34 percent) and the cost of the visa and application process (28 percent). Men were more concerned about cost and visa issues than women. Respondents from Mexico City were more concerned about

## V. Latin America

gaining acceptance than those outside the capital, while respondents from outside Mexico City were more likely to be concerned about cost and the language barrier.

The most frequently cited reason for wishing to study in another country was the quality or type of academic program (cited by 68 percent of respondents). Many respondents also cited the cultural experience and career preparation as main reasons for international study (64 percent each).

The top sources of information on study in the U.S. for Mexican respondents were the IIE/Education USA advising center (51 percent), teachers and professors (40 percent), the internet or news media (38 percent), friends or classmates (37 percent) and higher education fairs or information sessions (32 percent).

About half (49 percent) of respondents were just starting to think about international study, while 41 percent had already decided to study internationally and 10 percent had already studied in another country. Men were much more likely than women to have already decided to study internationally.

**Figure 37: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Mexico**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	58.9%	14.5%
Spain	10.8%	11.7%
Canada	9.3%	15.4%
United Kingdom	5.7%	16.2%
France	4.9%	6.5%
Germany	2.8%	5.3%
Australia	1.0%	5.8%
Italy	1.0%	2.8%
Other	n/a	n/a
No alternate choice	n/a	4.0%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 38: Percent of Students in Mexico Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Continental Europe	Asia	Middle East
High quality higher education system	87.1	73.1	30.5	63.5	18.8	7.6
Wide range of schools and programs	86.0	46.2	20.8	62.7	10.9	4.1
Welcomes international students	85.8	67.5	57.1	68.3	37.3	25.4
Expensive tuition	74.1	69.8	28.2	45.2	12.2	7.9
Good student support services	67.5	38.3	32.7	47.0	12.9	6.1
Costly application process	64.2	61.7	25.1	44.7	13.5	12.2
Safe place to study	61.4	63.7	50.0	59.4	13.5	5.3
Complicated student visa process	58.1	21.1	12.2	15.2	15.7	14.7
Many scholarship opportunities	57.9	22.3	21.2	42.1	9.6	4.8
High cost of living	51.0	70.1	28.4	60.2	13.2	8.6
Language barrier	16.2	14.5	13.5	26.2	69.5	70.3

## VI. Middle East

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### Saudi Arabia

**S**audi Arabia is the top Middle Eastern country of origin of international students studying in the U.S., and the fourth leading place of origin overall. During the 2013/14 academic year, there were 53,919 Saudi students studying at U.S. colleges and universities, a 21 percent increase over the previous year.

In fall 2011, IIE partnered with EducationUSA in Saudi Arabia to conduct a survey of Saudi students interested in studying in the U.S. regarding their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. as a study abroad destination compared to other potential host destinations. Respondents were also asked about the obstacles they faced, their preferred study destinations, their intended field of study, their reasons for wishing to study abroad and their primary sources of information on studying in the U.S.

Male respondents constituted 73 percent of respondents while female constituted 27 percent. About half (46 percent) had already decided to study abroad at the time of the survey, while 39 percent were just beginning to think about studying abroad and 15 percent had already studied abroad.

The majority of respondents (54 percent) were interested in pursuing a graduate degree abroad, with 38 percent interested in an undergraduate degree, 25 percent interested in foreign language study (e.g., intensive English) and 20 percent interested in a professional degree such as an MBA, MD or JD, etc. (respondents could select more than one type of study).

The most frequently cited reason for wishing to study abroad was the quality or type of academic program (cited by 81 percent of respondents). About half (49 percent) of respondents also cited the cultural experience and 28 percent cited preparing for a future career in a foreign country or a foreign-based company as reasons for studying abroad.

Business/management was the most popular intended field of study, chosen by 35 percent of respondents, followed by engineering (30 percent), the health professions (12

percent). A further 17 percent were interested in other STEM fields, such as math or computer science and physical or life science, and nine percent were interested in education.

The most popular first-choice destination by an overwhelming margin was the United States, with 88 percent of respondents listing the U.S. as their first-choice destination in an open-ended question (Fig. 39). Canada was the next most popular first-choice destination, with six percent of the total, followed by the United Kingdom with three percent. No other destination was chosen by more than one percent of the total.

Canada was the most popular alternate destination if the first-choice destination was not available, chosen by 33 percent of respondents. The United Kingdom was the next most popular alternate destination, with 31 percent of the total, followed by the U.S. and Australia with 15 percent each.

Prospective students from Saudi Arabia perceive the U.S. as having a wide range of programs (94 percent of respondents), having a high quality higher education system (90 percent), being welcoming to international students (85 percent), offering a good lifestyle for students (84 percent) and offering good student support services (83 percent) (Fig. 40). Respondents also tended to be aware of the many scholarship opportunities open to them for study in the U.S. (79 percent), and also felt that the U.S. was a safe place to study (72 percent).

However, more than half (58 percent) of respondents felt that it is difficult to get a student visa to study in the U.S., and that tuition at U.S. colleges and universities is expensive (54 percent). While 54 percent of respondents also felt that tuition at British universities is expensive, more students felt that the cost of living is high in the U.K. (60 percent) than in the U.S. (43 percent). Saudi students also perceived American English to be more difficult than British English or Australian English.

While the cost of studying abroad was cited by 45 percent of respondents as a major obstacle to studying abroad, this is a much smaller proportion than in other origin countries.

## VI. Middle East

One reason for this is the availability of Saudi government scholarships for study abroad. The King Abdullah Scholarship Program was started in 2004 to increase the number of Saudis studying at colleges and universities in the West, particularly women (who must be accompanied by a male guardian if living abroad). Scholarships are also available for English language preparation prior to enrollment in a degree program.

Other perceived obstacles for Saudi students seeking to study abroad include gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (cited by 30 percent of respondents), distance from home or family (24 percent) and obtaining a visa (22 percent). Some respondents also cited finding accurate information (17 percent), language difficulties (14 percent) and cultural differences (six percent) as obstacles, while 14 percent reported no obstacles.

The top sources cited for information on study in the U.S. were the Internet (cited by 65 percent of respondents), parents or relatives abroad (61 percent), friends or classmates (41 percent) and the EducationUSA advising center (30 percent) (respondents could list more than one source).

**Figure 39: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations of Prospective Students from Saudi Arabia**

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	88.1%	15.3%
Canada	5.6%	32.6%
United Kingdom	2.9%	30.8%
Australia	0.8%	14.6%
France	0.3%	4.0%
Germany	0.2%	5.2%
Middle East	0.9%	4.3%
All Others	1.2%	19.4%
No alternate choice	n/a	10.1%
TOTAL	100.0%	n/a

**Figure 40: Percent of Students in Saudi Arabia Who Agree the Statement Describes the Study Destination**

	U.S.	U.K.	Australia	Continental Europe	Asia	Middle East
Wide range of schools and programs	93.8	26.9	14.1	14.3	7.6	3.2
High quality higher education system	89.8	37.2	18.2	19.1	6.4	2.6
Welcomes international students	84.5	26.4	24.5	15.3	16.1	10.8
Good lifestyle for students	84.3	30.5	25.1	23.3	10.8	8.5
Good student support services	83.0	25.7	18.2	14.1	9.6	4.3
Many scholarship opportunities	78.9	16.9	14.0	11.1	9.3	8.1
Safe place to study	71.7	31.0	28.1	19.8	13.7	15.0
Difficult to get a student visa	57.9	21.6	9.3	14.3	1.7	3.0
Expensive tuition	53.5	53.6	21.4	30.2	4.3	5.3
Costly school application process	45.3	41.9	17.3	23.4	3.3	4.0
High cost of living	42.9	59.9	23.4	37.5	4.7	3.2
Language barrier	26.1	16.0	11.6	32.5	32.7	8.4



## VII. Conclusion

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**T**he United States hosted a record high of over 886,052 international students during the 2013/14 academic year (*Open Doors*, 2014). In the recent IIE/AIFS publication *Who Goes Where and Why?* (IIE, 2011), Caroline Macready and Clive Tucker identify several reasons for optimism that the flow of international students will continue to increase in the coming years. These include population demographics - as the world population becomes increasingly concentrated in developing countries with high birth rates, the resulting increase in demand for higher education in these countries will not be met by the existing domestic higher education capacity; the new global economy in which China, India and other Asian countries have become major economic powers; and the importance of being taught in English and other world languages in degree programs that are internationally recognized.

Macready and Tucker also identify reasons for caution, which also need to be taken into account. For example, traditional sending destinations are now strengthening their own domestic higher education sectors; and the emergence of transnational “borderless” education, which allows students to take advantage of international degree programs while remaining in their home countries.

Students take into account a variety of different factors when making the decision to study in another country. “Push factors” are those that encourage students to leave their home country to study internationally. These include not being able to find the specific course or type of course they wish to pursue in their home country, including not being able to find an appropriate course for the student’s background and level of training at home and/or not being able to enroll in their preferred course at home due to capacity controls or competitive entry requirements. In addition, students may wish to study internationally in order to broaden their cultural and intellectual horizons and improve their job prospects, as well as to prepare for the next stage of their education or career.

In opposition to push factors are “anti-push factors”, which function as roadblocks for students who otherwise might

wish to study internationally. These include financial, travel and/or visa difficulties, as well as personal or family commitments and/or cultural issues.

“Pull factors” are the factors that cause students to choose a specific destination over others. These include the quality of the education provided; special courses not offered in other countries; preferred language of instruction (English in particular); historical and political relations between countries and migration patterns; cost; internationally-recognized degrees; opportunities to work in the country of study; being able to finish the degree in a specified period of time; successful marketing campaigns organized by the destination country or institution(s); financial support and incentives; and less stringent student visa regulations, including the ability to work while studying.

Many host destinations, both traditional and emerging, have developed national-level plans and strategies to attract more international students, creating a competitive environment for international student recruitment. Several of these national policies are examined in the recent IIE *Project Atlas* publication *Student Mobility and the Internationalization of Higher Education* (IIE, 2011). In the introduction to the volume, Bhandari explains that as the overall number of globally mobile students continues to grow and more countries emerge as important destinations, newer hosts such as China are receiving a growing share of the pie, as their international student numbers increase. While this has resulted in smaller market shares for the traditional host countries, it has had the positive effect of bringing more countries into the field of international education, and has also changed the traditional relationship between sending and receiving countries from unidirectional ‘brain drain’ to one of more balanced, mutually beneficial exchange.

Though the U.S. market share of the world’s mobile students has declined over the past decade, the U.S. remains the destination of choice for the greatest number of globally mobile students, and has sufficient capacity to absorb expanded numbers of international students in its large and diverse higher education system. Furthermore, in spite of its highly decentralized recruitment system,

## VII. Conclusion

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the United States is well-positioned in the international student marketplace, with various pull factors attracting students to the U.S. The high quality of U.S. education is a prime factor, with over three-quarters of respondents worldwide rating the U.S. positively in this dimension. The wide range of schools and programs in the U.S. is another pull factor that attracts international students to its shores. Over three-quarters of respondents worldwide felt that the U.S. system of higher education was diverse with many options for different types of students. The U.S. is also seen as a country that welcomes international students to its shores, much more so than the other potential host destinations included in the survey.

Despite the predominance of pull factors attracting students to the U.S., anti-push factors also exist, with cost predominating. Cost was cited as the number one barrier to being able to study internationally, regardless of destination, by respondents from all countries surveyed. In addition, 62 percent of respondents worldwide perceived the U.S. to have expensive tuition. Interestingly, it was not exclusively students from less developed countries that perceived the U.S. to be the most expensive, but also students from developed countries that offer government subsidies for the pursuit of higher education. For example, 80 percent of students in the U.K. felt tuition in the U.S. to be expensive.

The difficulty of obtaining a student visa is also an anti-push factor, although it is not perceived to be as great a barrier as cost. As expected, perceptions about the difficulty of obtaining a visa to study in the U.S. vary by country and region: almost 60 percent of students in Latin America felt that it was difficult, but less than one quarter of students in South Africa and Turkey felt the same way. It is important to note that the majority of students surveyed had never themselves applied for a student visa. Those who had previously applied reported very little difficulty in obtaining it. This points to the success of efforts made by the U.S. Department of State to address the visa processing delays which occurred in some countries in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, as well as to clear misconceptions about the visa application process.

While each individual will ultimately make his or her decision on where to study based on a unique set of circumstances, certain factors do affect students from some countries more than others. The language of instruction is one of the pull factors that attract international students to predominantly English-speaking countries. The importance of English as a language of scholarship, commerce and science, contributes to the popularity of English-medium courses worldwide, and international students who study in English-speaking countries have the added benefit of being able to improve their English language skills while they complete their academic coursework. While English-medium courses are offered in many countries where English is not a predominant language, students are nevertheless aware that their daily lives outside the classroom will need to be conducted in another language. Germany and France, for example, were perceived as destinations posing a significant language barrier by 56 percent of respondents each, as compared with an average of eight percent for the four English-speaking destinations (the U.S., the U.K., Australia and Canada).

As the availability and quality of English as a foreign language instruction in secondary schools around the world varies widely, students from different countries have different perceptions of English as a barrier. Students in East and Southeast Asia were most likely to perceive English as a barrier to international study. In Mexico, as in many other countries, students living in urban centers, who tend to be from less disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, are less likely to perceive English as a barrier. Intensive English language programs (a known pathway to degree study in the U.S.) can assist students with low levels of English proficiency in transitioning to full degree programs. It is likely that English language instruction and other pull factors will continue to draw large numbers of students to the U.S. in the foreseeable future.

For the U.S. to continue to attract the best and the brightest students, access to accurate information is crucial, and EducationUSA advising offices worldwide will continue to play an important role in disseminating impartial, accurate and timely information about U.S. higher education to prospective international students around the world.

## VIII. Appendix: Methodology

The Institute of International Education (IIE) has conducted an annual census of international students in the United States since its founding in 1919. IIE's first independent publication of the results of the annual census was titled *Education for One World*, and reported on data for the 1948/49 academic year. It was renamed the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* in 1954/55, and began receiving support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Information Agency (USIA), now part of the U.S. Department of State, in 1972. *Open Doors* has long been regarded as the comprehensive source of data on trends in the enrollment of international students in U.S. higher education.

In order to provide a contextual background for the international student enrollment trends seen in *Open Doors*, IIE initiated a series of student attitudinal surveys in key sending countries, beginning with a pilot survey in March 2009 in Vietnam, which had at that time the fastest growing number of international students coming to the U.S. Prospective Vietnamese students from three regions in Vietnam (the South, Central Vietnam and the North) were surveyed in country via an online survey instrument regarding their preferred international study destinations, their reasons for wishing to study in another country, perceived obstacles facing international study and main sources of information on overseas study, as well as their opinions of the U.S. as a potential study destination compared to other potential host destinations.

The successful pilot survey in Vietnam was followed in summer 2009 by a paper-based survey of potential students in India, at that time the top place of origin of international students in the U.S. The student surveys in India were conducted in cooperation with the U.S.-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) and EducationUSA offices in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, representing North, West, East and South India. A summary of the results of the Vietnam and India student surveys was published in the *Open Doors 2009 Report on International Educational Exchange*.

The following year, IIE offices in Mexico City and Bangkok administered both online and paper surveys to prospective students in their respective countries. In Mexico, student surveys were conducted in five regions: the Center (including Mexico City), the South, the North, the East and the West. In Thailand, student surveys were conducted in Central Thailand (including Bangkok), the East, the North, the Northeast and the South. IIE's office in Hong Kong also surveyed prospective students in Hong Kong.

IIE also worked closely with EducationUSA offices around the world throughout 2010 to survey prospective students in Brazil, Germany, Nigeria, South Africa, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The student surveys were conducted online in Brazil,

Figure 41: Number of Responses by Place of Origin

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Number of Valid Surveys</u>	<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Number of Valid Surveys</u>
Brazil	2,326	Nigeria	211
Colombia	1,203	Saudi Arabia	676
France	503	South Africa	151
Germany	409	South Korea	656
Hong Kong	188	Thailand	1,103
India	1,044	Turkey	1,189
Japan	776	United Kingdom	2,901
Malaysia	210	Vietnam	707
Mexico	285	China	772
Nepal	483		

with respondents covering 25 of the 26 states in Brazil as well as the federal district (Brasília). Online and paper surveys were conducted in Germany, with responses coming from five EducationUSA centers across Germany. Paper surveys were administered to students attending EducationUSA-sponsored college fairs in Abuja and Lagos in Nigeria and in Johannesburg in South Africa. In Turkey online and paper surveys were administered by EducationUSA advisers in the Turkish Fulbright Commission offices in Istanbul and Ankara and the Turkish-American Association in Ankara. The U.S.-U.K. Fulbright Commission's EducationUSA office administered the student surveys in the U.K. at College Day fair days and other events.

In 2011, student surveys were administered in Japan by EducationUSA and the Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC). EducationUSA and the Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange (MACEE) administered surveys in Malaysia, and in South Korea surveys were conducted by EducationUSA and the Korean Fulbright Commission. In France, student surveys were conducted by EducationUSA and the Franco-American Commission for Educational Exchange, and in Colombia they were administered by EducationUSA and Fulbright Colombia. Student surveys were conducted in Saudi Arabia by EducationUSA and in the U.K. by EducationUSA and the U.S.-U.K. Fulbright Commission. Student surveys were conducted in Nepal in 2012 in collaboration with EducationUSA and the U.S. Educational Foundation in Nepal. In 2013, IIE affiliated with an academic researcher to administer online survey in Shanghai and surrounding regions.

15,902 valid responses were received worldwide. Response rates for each place of origin varied (Fig. 41). In the United Kingdom, in addition to the survey responses received from students, over 600 responses were received from parents, career advisers and other interested parties. Data from non-students was not included in this report.

## About IIE

Founded in 1919, the Institute of International Education (IIE) is a private nonprofit leader in the international exchange of people and ideas. In collaboration with governments, foundations and other sponsors, IIE creates and manages programs of study and training for students, educators and professionals from all sectors. These programs include the flagship Fulbright Program and Gilman Scholarships administered for the U.S. Department of State. IIE also conducts policy research, provides resources on international exchange opportunities and offers support to scholars in danger. IIE's annual survey of student mobility into and out of the U.S. is published as the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*.

## About Open Doors

The *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, is the only long-standing, comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars in the United States, and on U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit. The 2014 report provides detailed data on the 886,052 international students in the U.S. in 2013/14 and on the 289,408 U.S. students who studied abroad for academic credit in 2012/13. For more information, including online data tables, or to order a copy of the *Open Doors* print report and other publications, please visit [www.iie.org/opendoors](http://www.iie.org/opendoors).

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